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BY

RODERICK MacEACHEN

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VOLUME IV

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RODERICK MACEACHEN

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DOGMATIC SERIES.

Vol. IV.

CHAPTER I.

The Sacrament of Penance.

PENANCE is a Sacrament through which the sins committed after Baptism are forgiven. The Sacrament of Penance is one of the seven Sacraments instituted by Christ.

It is recorded in the Gospels that Christ often forgave sins. On a certain occasion He said to a paralytic: "Be of good heart, son, thy sins are forgiven thee."[1] At this the scribes accused Him of blasphemy. "Who can forgive sins but God alone?"[2] they asked. But Jesus wrought a miracle

[1] St. Matthew ix, 2.
[2] St. Luke v, 21.

to prove that "the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins."[3]

A sinful woman bathed Christ's feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. Then He said to her: "Thy sins are forgiven thee."[4] Jesus said to the penitent thief: "Amen, I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with Me in paradise."[5]

This power of forgiving sins which Christ exercised on earth He afterwards bestowed upon His Apostles. "For," said He, "As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you."[6] He sends His ministers to fulfil the same purpose for which He had come. He clothes them with the same power that He had received from the Father.

Christ's mission was in a special manner to sinners. "For," He says,

[3] St. Luke v, 24.
[4] St. Luke vii, 48.
[5] St. Luke xxiii, 43.
[6] St. John xx, 21.

"I am not come to call the just, but sinners."[7] He had come to save a sinful race. Hence, the power to forgive sins was necessary for the fulfilment of His mission. So, too, it was necessary for those whom He sent "as the Father had sent" Him.

After His resurrection Christ appeared to His Apostles and said: "Peace be to you. As the Father hath sent me, I also send you. When He had said this, He breathed on them and said: Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins ye shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins ye shall retain they are retained."[8] Here Christ confers upon His Apostles the power to forgive sins. But their apostolate is to last until the end of time.

Christ said to those same Apostles: "Behold, I am with you all days even

[7] St. Matthew ix, 13.
[8] St. John xx, 21-23.

to the consummation of the world."[9] Hence, the ministerial powers which they received were intended for them and their successors in all ages. In the same manner Christ conferred upon His Apostles the power to preach the Gospel and to baptize. This power has certainly been perpetuated in the Church. It is reasonable then to believe that the power to forgive sins should also be exercised in the Church today.

Christ here bestowed a judicial power upon His ministers. They are to forgive and also to retain sins. There are two positive powers. The power to retain sins does not mean merely the failure to exercise the power to forgive sins. It means the power to perform a judicial act. By a positive act of his ministry the priest retains sins to those who are not rightly disposed to receive absolution.

[9] St. Matthew xxviii, 20.

In the Sacrament of Baptism the priest exercises no judicial power. By Baptism he forgives sin; he does not retain them. To refuse Baptism is not to retain sins. Nor does a priest retain sins when he refuses to hear a person's sacramental confession. Anyone may baptize and anyone may refuse to baptize. But only a priest can forgive sins and only a priest can retain sins.

Sins are forgiven both in the Sacrament of Baptism and in the Sacrament of Penance. Yet Baptism differs widely from Penance. The forms of the two Sacraments indeed are similar. The ministerial power, too, is the same in both. Baptism is a spiritual birth. If a man is mortally wounded he can not be born again to be made whole. Penance is a spiritual remedy through which even the worst mortal wounds of the soul are healed.

Christ saw fit to establish a Sacra-

ment to take away man's first sins. But man is weak. "For a just man shall fall seven times and shall rise again."[10] All men are sinners. "If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."[11] Hence, it was not strange that our all-loving Redeemer should have established a Sacrament to take away the sins that we commit after Baptism. It is in keeping with His plan of Salvation.

The power which Christ conferred on the Apostles when He said: "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained," is exercised in the Sacrament of Penance. By these words Christ could not have conferred the mere faculty to declare that sins are forgiven. For then He would have also given the faculty to declare sins

[10] Proverbs xxiv, 16.
[11] I Epistle of St. John i, 8.

retained. Such a faculty could have had no object. It would have been strange were priests to go about declaring which are just and which are sinners. This would add little to the work of saving souls.

No mere man can forgive sins in his own name. Nor can man baptize in his own name. Nor can he preach the Gospel in his own name. God gives mortal man the power to procreate other human beings. Surely then He can give him the power to forgive sins in His name. He gives man medical knowledge and material remedies to cure the ills of the body. Surely then He has given us a remedy for the ills of the soul.

Christ could have decreed that He would directly remit each man's sins. He could have decreed that nothing else were necessary for the remission of sins than an interior act of repentance. In like manner God could have

decided to create each human being as He created Adam. He could have decided to put sufficient medical properties in each man's body to heal all his wounds and broken bones. He could have dispensed with priests and fathers and mothers and physicians, and many other intermediary agencies. But He did not.

The reason why Christ established the Sacrament of Penance and the other Sacraments is that He so willed. All sins can be forgiven in the Sacrament of Penance. Yet Sacred Scripture says: "Every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven men, but the blasphemy of the Spirit shall not be forgiven. And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but he that shall speak against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world nor in the world to come."[12]

[12] St. Matthew xii, 31, 32.

If these words are literally true, there are some who can not be saved. Then these sins against the Holy Ghost can not be forgiven even in the Sacrament of Baptism. Nor can they be forgiven by repentance, Yet, "saith the Lord: if your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow; and if they be red as crimson, they shall be white as wool."[13] If the wicked man "do penance for his sin . . . none of his sins which he hath committed shall be imputed to him."[14]

Hence, it is necessary to understand what is meant by "blasphemy of the Spirit" and speaking "against the Holy Ghost." Christ's words clearly refer to a special kind of blasphemy. St. Augustine says: "Impenitence is the blasphemy of the Spirit. . . . We can call this impenitence either blasphemy or the word against the Holy

[13] Isaias i, 18.
[14] Ezechiel xxxiii, 14-16.

Ghost. . . . But this impenitence or impenitent heart can not be judged in this world. No one need despair so long as the patience of God leads us to repentance. God does not snatch us out of this life. For He wills not that a sinner should die, but that he 'be converted and live.'[15]

"He is a pagan today. Perhaps he will be a Christian tomorrow. He is an unbelieving Jew today. What if he believe in Christ tomorrow? He is a heretic today. What if he should accept Catholic truth? He is a schismatic today. What if he should embrace Catholic peace tomorrow? What if those in whatever kind of error, that seemed to be most despairingly damned, should do penance and find true life in the world to come?

"Hence, the Apostle warns us not to judge before the time.[16] Hence, this

[15] Ezechiel xviii, 23.

[16] I Epistle to the Corinthians iv, 5.

blasphemy of the Spirit is not every kind of blasphemy. It is a persevering hardness of an impenitent heart. It can not be forgiven. Yet we can never know in this life when anyone is guilty of it."[17] The Holy Ghost gives us the grace of repentance. Those who resist this grace to the end can not obtain forgiveness of their sins. They reject the mercy of God.

St. Paul seems to hold that apostacy is an unpardonable sin. "For," he says, "it is impossible for those who were once illuminated, have tasted also the heavenly gifts, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, have moreover tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, and are fallen away: to be renewed again to penance."[18]

St. Paul is writing to the Jews who have been converted. He warns them

[17] Sermon lxxi, vol. V. Nn. 20-21.
[18] Epistle to the Hebrews vi, 4-5.

against the great danger of falling away from the Faith. He reminds them of all the graces thay have received from the Holy Ghost. He tells them that it would be impossible for them to obtain the grace of repentance should they neglect these great graces. It is not impossible for God to give them the grace of repentance. But if they fall away their hearts will be so hardened that it will be virtually impossible for them to repent.

There is a passage which seems to say that there are certain sins for which it is useless to ask pardon. "He that knoweth his brother to sin a sin which is not to death, let him ask, and life shall be given to him who sinneth not to death. There is a sin unto death: for that I say not that any man should ask."[19] The "sin unto death" here is meant apostacy from the known Truth. St. John does not forbid them

[19] I Epistle of St. John v, 16.

to pray for apostates. He merely does not command them to do so. He does not say that the sin can not be forgiven.

Christ conferred upon His Apostles the power to bind and loose. This is called the "power of the keys." Jesus said to them: "Amen, I say to you, whatsoever you shall bind on earth, shall be bound also in Heaven, and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in Heaven."[20] By these words Christ gives His Apostles jurisdiction over His Church.

Keys are a sign of authority. When the Prophet Isaias describes the power that Eliacim is to have as master of the temple, he says: "I will lay the key of the house of David upon his shoulder; and he shall open, and none shall shut: and he shall shut, and none shall open."[21] Eliacim was a figure of

[20] St. Matthew xviii, 18.
[21] Isaias xxii, 22.

Christ. Of Christ it was written: "Thus saith the Holy One and the True One; he that hath the key of David; he that openeth, and no man shutteth; shutteth, and no man openeth."[22]

The "power of the keys" embraces authority to rule the Church of Christ in all things. It confers jurisdiction to regulate discipline and make external laws. Yet it also confers, in a special manner, the jurisdiction to remit and retain sins in the Sacrament of Penance. The decrees of Christ's vicars on earth are to be ratified in Heaven. Their decisions will stand before the Court of God. It is clear, then, that they have been constituted judges of the Divine Law on earth. But sin is the crime that is heard before the Court of Divine Law. The sinner is the criminal who must stand before these judges.

[22] Apocalypse iii, 7.

The sinner appears before the tribunal of Penance. He is both the accused and the accusing witness. He confesses his sins. He lays bare the motives of his heart. The outside world is barred from this trial. The newspapers do not report the evidence that is given here. No lawyers are engaged to plead the case. The accused kneels humbly beside the judge. The Holy Ghost abides with both judge and criminal.

The priest is chosen from amongst men to fulfil this high office of God on earth. He bears a grave responsibility. To him it was said: "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." To him it was said: "Whatsoever you shall bind on earth, it shall be bound also in Heaven, and whatsoever you shall loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in Heaven." He must decide whether

the accused is to be loosed or bound. Then he must answer for his decisions to God. All the decrees of his ministry will await him in eternity. When he appears before the Great Judge he shall have to render a strict account of his stewardship.

St. John Chrysostom says that the priests "received a power which was given neither to angels nor archangels by God. For He did not say to the angels and archangels: 'Whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound also in Heaven, and whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed also in Heaven.' Earthly rulers have power to bind the body alone. But this bond encircles the soul and transcends the heavens. What the priests decree below, God confirms above. The Lord ratifies the decisions of His servants. What else did God give to His priests than the fullness of celestial power? For, he says, 'Whose sins you shall for-

give, they are forgiven.' What power is greater than this?"[23]

"By manifold mercy," says St. Leo the Great, "God helps fallen man so that not only through the grace of Baptism, but also through the remedy of Penance the hope of eternal life, may be repaired. . . . For Christ Jesus the Mediator between God and man gave to the rulers of His Church the power to give work of penance to those who confess their sins and to admit them through the door of repentance to the communion of the Sacraments after they have been purged by fitting satisfaction."[24]

[23] De Sacerdotio l. 3, n. 5, Migne, P. G. t. xlviii, c. 643.
[24] Epis. 108, c. 2; M. 54, 1011.

CHAPTER II.

Confession.

TO RECEIVE the Sacrament of Penance worthily it is necessary to confess all our mortal sins. This confession must be made to an authorized priest. Christ constituted His Apostles and their successors spiritual judges over the souls of men. He gave them power to loose and to bind, to forgive and retain sins. They were authorized to conduct judicial proceedings upon the sins of men.

But they can not pass judicial sentence without first having judicial knowledge of the case. This judicial knowledge can come only from the confession of the sinner. Sins are internal actions. The external action of sin is merely a manifestation of the sinful act within. Hence, confession

is of prime necessity. Otherwise the priest could not have judicial knowledge of the case which he is to judge. Confession is necessary also to enable the priest to determine the disposition of the penitent.

Confession is not mentioned in the written words of Christ. However, Christ bestowed a judicial power upon His Apostles which could not be exercised without confession. Hence, He implied the necessity of confession by conferring such a power upon them. Christ left many things for the guidance of the Holy Ghost, Who when He came taught them all truth.[1] Christ did not explain the details of the ministry which He bestowed upon the Apostles. He intended that the Church should develop all these matters with the assistance of the Holy Ghost.

Our confession must be in the form of self-accusation. A mere recital of

[1] St. John xvi, 13.

our sins does not constitute confession. It must be complete, embracing all our grave sins. We confess those sins which we wish to have forgiven. But there is no forgiveness of sin except that which includes all our sins. Hence, we must confess all our sins. We must tell all our mortal sins.

We need not confess our venial sins. However, it is well to confess them. Venial sins of themselves form valid matter for confession. If we are conscious of no sin we may confess some forgiven sin or sins of our past life. We can thus gain the grace of the Sacrament. We can receive the grace of pardon again and again for the same offense.

Our confession must be detailed. We must tell each sin separately. We must tell its nature and also the number of times we have committed it. We must also tell any circumstances that change the nature of the sin.

It is not always possible to make our confession absolutely complete. To confess our sins is a human action. Our confession must be as complete as it is morally possible for us to make it. Our good Lord requires of us only what human nature can give. It is impossible to confess a sin which we may have forgotten. Nor can we confess sins of which we are not conscious. If we forget to tell a mortal sin, we should mention it in our next confession. It is forgiven, however, indirectly if we have omitted it through no fault of our own.

Wilfully to conceal a mortal sin in confession is a sin of sacrilege. It renders our confession worthless. We do not gain the grace of the Sacrament.

There are certain reasons which sometimes excuse us from making a complete confession of our sins. When death is imminent confession is some-

times impossible. The person may be just dying or he may be unconscious.

Just before a battle in warfare, general absolution is sometimes given to the soldiers. They are asked to make an act of contrition. There is not time for confession. The same is done in time of shipwreck and other calamities. Ignorance of the language spoken excuses a person from making a complete confession. No one is ever bound to make his confession in writing or through an interpreter.

Confession of sins in the Sacrament of Penance should be made ordinarily by word of mouth. If, however, oral confession is impossible, signs may be used. A deafmute can confess only by signs. The sick who are unable to speak may indicate their sins by pressing the hand or other means. In such a case the priest names the sins and the person makes the sign agreed upon. This may also be done when it is im-

possible to obtain the privacy necessary to preserve the secrecy of confession.

In case of extreme necessity, confession may be made orally or written through a messenger. This can be done only in case it is feared the person will become unconscious before the priest arrives. Of course the priest must be present when he afterwards gives absolution. In this case he may, undoubtedly, give unconditional absolution.

Confession is made privately to the priest. However, public confession would be valid if made before the priest. Secret or auricular confession to the priest has been the practice in the Church from the beginning. In the early centuries of the Church public sins were confessed publicly. This was in keeping with the public penances imposed in those days. Public acts of reparation are required also by the

Church today for certain grave scandals.

The Church never required public confession or public penance for private sins. No crimes were punished publicly except those that came within the external discipline of the Church. Persons accused were brought before a public tribunal composed of the bishop and his counselors. If they were found guilty they were required to make public amends for their sins.

The Sacrament of Penance is a private tribunal. It belongs to the internal discipline of souls. What happens therein has always been held sacred from the outside world. St. Thomas says: "Those things which are performed exteriorly in the Sacraments are a figure of those that take place interiorly. Thus confession, by which we subject ourselves to the priest, is a sign of the interior act by

which we subject ourselves to God. Now God covers up the sin of him who subjects himself to Him through repentance. Hence, this must be signified in the Sacrament of Penance. Thus confession is necessarily secret."[2]

[2] Summa Theologica. In 4, d. 21, q. 3, a. 1.

CHAPTER III.

Contrition.

CONTRITION, confession and satisfaction are component parts in the Sacrament of Penance. A contrite confession of sin together with a will to make satisfaction for the offense committed is the external sign of the Sacrament. Christ instituted the Sacrament of Penance as a tribunal or court. Hence, accusations and testimony and pleadings must necessarily form a part of its proceedings.

Judicial cases are solved by the accusation of the criminal and the decision of the judge. Confession is the self-accusation of the criminal. It is the testimony in the case. Contrition and a readiness to perform the penance imposed, form the pleadings.

Absolution or its refusal is the decision of the judge.

Without repentance on the part of the sinner sins can not be forgiven. In vain are the words of absolution pronounced upon an impenitent sinner. Not even God could forgive a person who refuses to repent of his sins. For so long as he fails to repent he clings to his sins. And to cling to sin is to continue the act of sinning.

Contrition is a detestation for sin and a sorrow for having offended God. It implies the desire to avoid sin in the future. Contrition is a positive act of the will. It does not consist in mere disgust for the effects of sin, nor is it a mere matter of feeling. True contrition may exist without any external emotion. Contrition is an aversion of the will from all personal sin. A person may even leave off sinning and begin a new life without having contrition. He may reform from mo-

tives other than sorrow for sin and the loss of God's friendship.

The word "contrition" means to crush or grind together. Pride is the beginning of every sin. Contrition is that act of the will which grinds to atoms, as it were, the hardness of the sinful heart. It humbles us and makes us obedient to the precepts of God. "Now, therefore, saith the Lord: Be converted to me with all your hearts, in fasting, and in weeping, and in mourning, and rend your hearts and not your garments."[1] The sinner can not be saved without sorrow for his sins. "Be penitent, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out."[2]

To have contrition, our sins must become repugnant to our will. We wish that we had never offended God. This is called detestation for sin.

[1] Joel ii, 12-13.
[2] Acts of the Apostles iii, 19.

Besides, there must be a certain note of sadness in our mind for the evil sin has brought upon us. This is sorrow for sin. We are sorry for the evil that is upon us. Even the memory of forgiven sin is an evil present to us that makes us sad. Furthermore, it is impossible to detest sin without having a firm purpose to avoid it in future.

Contrition must proceed from the highest motives; it must be sovereign; it must exclude the will to sin. The sinner should detest sin more than any other evil that can befall him. He need not make comparisons in his mind. Yet his sorrow should be, in itself, of the deepest form. Subjectively, he need not feel this depth of sorrow.

Contrition must be universal. It must extend to all mortal sins of which we are guilty. We must be sorry also for sins that we may have forgotten.

We can not be truly sorry for any of our grave sins unless we are sorry for all. However, we may have special sorrow for certain sins. Our venial sins need not necessarily be included in our confession. Yet we should be sorry for them also. We may be truly sorry for one venial sin without being sorry for other venial sins that we have committed. However, he who confesses venial sins only must be sorry for them. For contrition is an essential part of the Sacrament.

Contrition need not be expressed by the spoken word. It is an interior act of the will. The "act of contrition" which we say is merely an external expression of the interior contrition which we have awakened in our heart. The penitent should have contrition when absolution is given. Should he fail to complete the formal act of contrition before the words of absolution are spoken, he need have no

scruples. For he had contrition in his heart before he could elicit an act of contrition.

There is perfect contrition and there is imperfect contrition. Perfect contrition is contrition proper. Imperfect contrition is commonly called attrition.

Perfect contrition is based upon charity. The quality of our contrition depends upon our motive. Perfect contrition has for its prime motive our love for God. We detest our sins because they offend God whom we love. An act of perfect love for God is also an act of perfect contrition. For it necessarily embraces detestation for sins committed.

An act of perfect love for God takes away sin of itself. However, it implies a desire to receive the Sacrament of Penance. He who elicits an act of perfect love for God, desires to fulfil the Divine Will in all things. This

includes the Sacrament of Penance. Christ says: "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them; he it is that loveth me. And he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father: and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him."[3] The Council of Trent teaches: "It happens sometimes that contrition is made perfect by charity and reconciles a man to God before he receives this Sacrament of Penance."[4]

Many, undoubtedly, are saved at the hour of death by making an act of perfect contrition. It is also a great blessing for many who can not go to confession at once after they have fallen into mortal sin. It is not, perhaps, difficult to elicit an act of perfect contrition if we recall to mind the wonders of God's love for us.

Imperfect contrition or attrition is based upon the fear of punishment for

[3] St. John xiv, 21.
[4] Denzinger, n. 778.

sin. He who is sorry for his sins because he fears eternal damnation has imperfect contrition. This motive enables him to have true sorrow for his sins. Hence, imperfect contrition suffices for the Sacrament of Penance. Perfect contrition is not required for a worthy reception of this Sacrament. He who has attrition truly wishes to be saved. He is fearful lest he lose eternal joy in Heaven.

Christ Himself urges us to have this holy fear: "Fear ye not them that kill the body, and are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him that can destroy both body and soul in hell."[5] The qualities of attrition must be the same as those of contrition properly so called. The difference between contrition and attrition lies in the motive alone.

All true contrition must arise from a supernatural motive. It must come

[5] St. Matthew x, 28.

from our love for God or from fear lest we suffer the pains of hell.

Mere natural motives of sorrow do not make contrition. If a person were sorry for his sins because through them he has lost health or social standing, he would not have contrition. Nor is mere disgust for the baseness and the disgrace of sin contrition. There is a natural feeling of repulsion that follows the indulgence of the passions. This is not contrition unless it arises from supernatural motives.

"God is charity: and he that abideth in charity, abideth in God, and God in him."[6] God loves us with an endless love. He has prepared for us an eternity of perfect bliss. Sin alone can separate us from God and deprive us of this eternal bliss. These are the motives for contrition.

[6] I St. John iv, 16.

CHAPTER IV.

The Form of the Sacrament of Penance.

THE words of absolution spoken by the priest constitute the form of the Sacrament of Penance. They are: "I absolve thee from thy sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen." These or similar words authorized by the Church are essential to the Sacrament. Without them the Sacrament can not be administered. They are as necessary to this Sacrament as are the words in Baptism: "I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

The complete form of absolution now in use is not all essential. Parts of it may be omitted when there is

sufficient reason for so doing. After the priest has imposed a salutary penance, he says: "May the Almighty God have mercy on thee, forgive thee thy sins, and lead thee to life everlasting. Amen."

Then, holding his right hand elevated toward the penitent, he continues: "May the Almighty and merciful Lord grant thee pardon, absolution and remission of thy sins. Amen. May our Lord Jesus Christ absolve thee: I also by His authority absolve thee from every bond of excommunication (suspension), and interdict so far as I can and thou mayest need it. Wherefore, I absolve thee from thy sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen."

Then he adds: "May the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, the merits of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of all the saints, whatever good thou hast

done, and whatever evil thou hast borne be for thee unto the remission of sins, and an increase of grace, and the reward of eternal life. Amen."

When the words of absolution are pronounced over a person who is rightly disposed, his sins are then and there forgiven. The priest does not merely declare that God has pardoned his sins. By those words he perfects a Sacrament which not only signifies that the penitent's sins are pardoned, but in reality takes away these sins.

"The Sacraments of the New Law," says St. Thomas, "not only signify, but effect what they signify. Hence, he who says: 'I absolve thee,' not only signifies that the person is absolved from his sins, but really absolves him. Hence it is that the priest does not pronounce these words as if they pertained to something uncertain. For the Sacraments have of themselves a sure effect by virtue

of Christ's passion. Yet this effect may be impeded on the part of the recipient."[1]

No form of absolution may be used unless it be authorized by the Church. Diverse forms have indeed been authorized by the Church. However, the form must ever indicate that the priest himself forgives sins by virtue of his ministerial power. A mere petition, such as a private person might use to ask God's pardon, could never be a valid form for the Sacrament of Penance. The priest performs a judicial act when he absolves a person. Hence, his words must indicate an authoritative, judicial decision.

Yet it is not necessary that the words explicitly indicate the direct action of the priest. If the Church approved the form: "May God absolve thee from thy sins," the sense would be: "May God absolve thee

[1] Summa Theologica 3, q. 84, a. 3. ad 5.

through the power committed to me." Otherwise, the priest would not be fulfilling a ministry. He would simply be begging God's forgiveness as any private person might do.

It seems that the Church in past ages admitted forms that were simply deprecatory in their literal sense. Deprecatory forms are generally used in the East. A deprecatory form can only be valid when it is clear from the circumstances of the time that it has an indicative meaning. Now these deprecatory forms have this meaning because the Church has given it to them.

The law of a kingdom might decree that all judges should use in their decisions the words: "May the king free you and may the king inflict such and such a penalty upon you." In this sense all would understand that the decisions of the judges were still effective. Should the Church, how-

ever, refuse longer to admit deprecatory forms they would no longer have an indicative meaning.

From the days of the Apostles, the Church has always declared that her ministers possess the power to forgive sins in the Sacrament of Penance. Hence, any form that she authorizes for this Sacrament must indicate, to her satisfaction, the exercise of this power.

Absolution must be given by word of mouth. Such has been the constant tradition of the Church. A judicial decision indeed may be handed down in writing. Yet the Sacraments are all administered by the spoken word. Nor is there any reason why the Sacrament of Penance should be an exception to this rule.

The priest must be present to the penitent when he pronounces the words of absolution. He must be near enough to talk with the penitent. The Church

has not yet decided the question whether absolution can be given by telephone. It is highly improbable that this will ever be declared licit. However, until the Church decides otherwise it might be permitted in case of extreme necessity. In every ordinary case there would be great danger of exposing the Sacrament to disrespect.

CHAPTER V.

Satisfaction for Sin.

IT IS not enough to have our sins forgiven. We must do penance for them. We must make amends for them. We must offer satisfaction for them. There is a twofold evil in sin. By sin we are deprived of God's friendship. By sin we also incur penalties.

In sin there is guilt. There is attached to sin both eternal and temporal punishment. Sacramental absolution takes away the guilt of sin and also the eternal punishment. The temporal punishment must be taken away by satisfaction offered to God. Hence it is that the priest imposes a penance in the Sacrament of Penance.

Strictly speaking, this penance should

be proportioned to the gravity of our sins. In the ancient Church penances were imposed that extended over many years. Today this discipline has been relaxed. Very slight penances are given. This is, doubtless, due to the spirit of these ages which makes long penances almost impossible.

Satisfaction is an integral part in the Sacrament of Penance. It perfects the Sacrament. Yet it does not belong to the essence of the Sacrament. The Sacrament is valid even though the penance is left unperformed. However, it is a sin to omit the penance imposed.

Christ did not mention satisfaction when He conferred upon the Apostles power to forgive sins. However, He established the Sacrament of Penance in the form of a judiciary. In every court of justice penalties and fines are imposed. It is thus penances are imposed in the Sacrament of Penance.

Christ instituted this Sacrament to cure sinful inclinations as well as to take away our sins. The Sacrament of Penance then is medicinal in its effects. Hence it must deter us from sin.

Were there no temporal punishments left after absolution the Sacrament of Penance might easily encourage us to sin. Human nature indeed might fail to recognize the gravity of sin. Christ could not have left this flaw in a Sacrament which He divinely instituted.

The temporal punishment must be atoned for either by penance in this world or by suffering in Purgatory. This punishment can not be wiped out until the sin is forgiven. The penance which the priest imposes in the Sacrament of Penance has merit in itself for satisfaction. It is a part of the Sacrament.

Sacramental penances are generally

prayers, almsgiving or fasting. In this threefold manner we make amends to God for the offenses we have committed against Him. By alms, we give from our temporal goods. By fasting, we give from our bodily comforts. By prayer, we offer the goods of our mind.

We can also obtain remission of the temporal punishment due to sin by private good works. These good works serve to prove our love for Him Whom we have offended. Holy Church bids us beg God to have mercy upon us for our past sins.

We can also help satisfy for one another's sins if we are in the state of grace. Yet we can not make satisfaction for another's sins until they have been forgiven him. The Church teaches that God accepts satisfaction made by one person for another's sin. We pray for the souls in Purgatory. They are expiating the temporal pun-

ishments due to their sins. Hence our prayers can benefit them only as satisfaction for these temporal punishments.

The priest may even permit one person to perform part of another's sacramental penance. Yet the penitent of himself can not transfer part of his penance upon another person. In the early centuries of the Church absolution may have been sometimes withheld until long public penances had been performed. However, it has been the general practice in the Church to grant absolution and impose a penance to be performed later.

The Council of Trent says of sacramental penances: "No means of removing the penalty threatened by the Lord was ever considered surer than that by which these works of penances are performed with true sorrow of the mind. Christ Jesus satisfied for our sins. Then when we make

satisfaction we conform with Him from Whom we have all our worth. Hence we have a sure pledge that if we suffer with Him we shall be also glorified.

"Nor is the satisfaction which we render for our sins other than that which comes through Christ Jesus. Of ourselves we can do nothing. Yet with the cooperation of Him Who strengthens us we can do all things. Wherefore man has no reason to glorify himself. Our glorification is in Christ, in Whom we live, in Whom we merit, in Whom we satisfy, bringing forth fruits worthy of penance. Our works have their force from Him. By Him they are offered to the Father. And the Father receives them from Him."[1]

[1] Denzinger, n. 783.

CHAPTER VI.

Effects of the Sacrament of Penance.

THE Sacrament of Penance remits sins. These sins are so completely wiped out that they can never return. It matters not what crimes the person may commit afterwards, he can never again be accused of his forgiven sins. To fall again into sins that have been forgiven indicates indeed more ingratitude on the part of the sinner. "The dog is returned to his vomit: and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire."[1] Yet the guilt of the previous sins is taken away forever.

Absolution can never become invalid because the penitent has fallen

[1] II Epistle of St. Peter ii, 22.

again into the same sins. Christ indeed said in the parable: "Thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all the debt, because thou besoughtest me. . . . And his Lord being angry, delivered him to the tortures until he paid all the debt."[2]

In this parable Christ was urging His hearers to charity. He was teaching them that they must show mercy if they wish to receive mercy from Him. In the comparison the debt, undoubtedly, means sin. This sin is forgiven. Then the sin of uncharity is committed. This creates the new debt which must be paid.

The Sacrament of Penance takes away the eternal penalty of sin and restores the sinner to the friendship of God. Never again can the penitent sinner be asked to pay this penalty. Never again can he lose the friendship of God unless he commit sin again.

[2] St. Matthew xviii, 32-34.

In the Sacrament of Penance, God also remits, at least, part of the temporal punishment due to sin. The amount of temporal punishment forgiven is measured by our disposition. The deeper and more sincere our repentance the more temporal punishment there is taken away.

God can forgive sins without taking away all the punishment that the sinner incurred. Though He remits the eternal punishment, God can still demand that the sinner pay a temporal penalty for his sins. The Prophet Nathan said to David: "The Lord also hath taken away thy sin: thou shalt not die. Nevertheless because thou hast given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, for this thing, the child that is born to thee shall surely die."[3] Moses and Aaron were not permitted to enter the promised land because they had offended God

[3] Kings xii, 14.

by their lack of faith. Yet God forgave their sin.[4]

God is not only merciful, He is also just. "He will render to every man according to his works."[5] In His mercy God remits the eternal punishment due to sin. Of himself man could never merit this forgiveness. Yet he can merit the remission of temporal punishment. After he has received the Sacrament of Penance, the penitent is like a person who has undergone a successful surgical operation. His ailment has been cured, yet he must suffer the pains of convalescence. The better his physical condition the sooner he will recover. The better the penitent's spiritual dispositions the less he will have to suffer after the guilt of his sins has been forgiven. It is as if God changed the eternal punishment into temporal punishment.

[4] Numbers xx and xxvii.
[5] St. Matthew xvi, 27.

The Sacrament of Penance confers sacramental graces. It gives us the grace to help us do penance for our sins. It also strengthens us against future sin.

By sin man loses the merits of his good works. These merits revive when he receives the Sacrament of Penance. "If the wicked do penance for all his sins which he hath committed, and keep all my commandments, and do judgment, and justice, living he shall live, and shall not die. I will not remember all his iniquities that he hath done: in his justice which he hath wrought, he shall live. . . . But if the just man turn away from justice . . . all his justices which he hath done, shall not be remembered. . . . And when the wicked turneth himself away from his wickedness, which he hath wrought, and doeth judgment and justice: he shall save his soul alive."[6]

[6] Ezechiel xviii, 21-27.

The Sacrament of Penance is the Sacrament of God's mercy. It takes away our sins and provides the remedies against sin. It reconciles us with God after we have rebelled against Him. It restores to us the eternal inheritance which we have lost by sin. It is the Sacrament which above all others brings peace to men's hearts. When a man has fallen into the dismal gloom of sin, peace departs from him. When he repents, he feels how little is his act of repentance compared to his sin.

God does not leave him in doubt. He gives him pardon through an external form so that he may know by his own human faculties that his sins have been taken away. When the priest pronounces the words of absolution upon a penitent sinner it is as if Christ appeared and said in human words: "Be of good heart, thy sins are forgiven thee."[7]

[7] St. Matthew ix, 2.

CHAPTER VII.

The Minister of the Sacrament of Penance.

NONE other than a priest can administer the Sacrament of Penance. Christ gave the power of forgiving sins to the Apostles. This was not a personal power. It was an official power that belonged to their ministry. This same power has been transmitted to all the priests and bishops of the world. They are the legitimate successors of the Apostles. They fulfil that same ministry which is to continue unto the end of time.

Christ established His ministry upon the Apostles. He promised to "be with them all days even to the consummation of the world."[1] Their min-

[1] St. Matthew xxvii, 20.

isterial powers were destined by Christ to continue in their successors until the last day. Hence, Christ said to all the priests and bishops of all times: "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained."[2]

During the Middle Ages, in cases of extreme necessity, the faithful sometimes made their confession to lay persons. This was done when a priest could not be obtained. By this act of humility they thought to dispose themselves for sacramental absolution at the hands of the priest.

It was not sacramental confession. It was looked upon as a pious practice. It must have been the custom at that time. "So great is the force of confession," says one writer, "that if the priest is wanting, confession is made to a lay person. It often happens that a penitent can not humble himself

[2] St. John xx, 23.

before a priest. Though he desires one, neither time nor place provides him. The person indeed to whom he confesses has no power to absolve him. Yet he who confesses to a companion becomes worthy by desire to receive sacerdotal pardon."[3]

Since it was permitted to make this "pious confession" to a lay person, the faithful naturally made their confession to a deacon if there was one at hand. Yet the deacons did not possess the power of the Keys any more than did lay persons. However, certain deacons began to arrogate to themselves the power of giving absolution. This erroneous claim was speedily condemned by the Church.

No deacon could ever confer sacramental absolution. Yet deacons have, at times, been commissioned to reconcile disobedient Christians to the Church. They have been deputed to

[3] De Vera et Falsa poententia, c. 10.

absolve from ecclesiastical censures. This simply means that they have been commissioned to declare to certain persons the will of the Church in some matter of discipline. To absolve from ecclesiastical censure is an act of external discipline. It is not a sacramental action.

In the early Church long public penances were required before public absolution was given. Penitents were absolved privately when they confessed their sins. Afterwards they were absolved publicly. This public absolution was not sacramental. When their public penance was ended a form of absolution was used to declare them reconciled to the Church.

This disciplinary absolution was often given by deacons. This fact has led some historians to hold falsely that deacons administered the Sacrament of Penance in the early Church. This absolution could not have been sac-

ramental. It was often given years after the penitent had confessed his sins. The Church could not require him to confess his sins over. Nor could she leave him years in his sins.

At his ordination the priest receives the power to forgive sins. Yet he can not, ordinarily, exercise this power without jurisdiction. He must be commissioned by ecclesiastical authority to administer the Sacrament of Penance. Without this commission his absolution would be invalid. In case of extreme necessity, however, any priest may grant absolution. Even an excommunicated priest may absolve a dying person if no authorized priest can be obtained.

Priests generally have faculties to hear confessions in their own diocese alone. When they are assigned to the care of souls, the bishop grants them the faculties of the diocese. This means that they are authorized to ad-

minister the Sacrament of Penance according to the rules laid down by the bishop.

Ordinarily, faculties to hear confessions are granted in writing. They may be given for a certain period of time. Or they may be given without condition of time or until recalled. The bishop can withdraw the faculties for hearing confessions whenever there is a just cause.

A bishop may grant faculties to a priest from another diocese. He may do so by word of mouth or in any manner by which he chooses to signify his will. He may permit one priest to grant faculties to another in his name. The faculties which all priests obtain when they are appointed to the care of souls are called ordinary jurisdiction. When a priest who is not laboring in the diocese receives faculties he has delegated jurisdiction.

Ordinarily, the jurisdiction of priests

to hear confessions is limited. It may be limited as to certain persons. The priest who acts as confessor to nuns must have a special commission. Yet nuns may go to any priest when he is hearing the confessions of others. If he is not especially approved, he can not hear their confessions by appointment.

The jurisdiction of priests may be limited as to certain sins. Some sins are reserved to the bishop or to the Pope. Four sins are mentioned as reserved to the Pope: Attempted marriage by one who is in Holy Orders or bound by a solemn vow of chastity; the sin of procuring abortion when the effect follows; using false apostolic letters or cooperating in the crime of falsifying them; and the sin of trafficking in Mass stipends for profit.

The sin of solicitation in the confessional is also reserved in a special manner by the Pope. Any suggestion lead-

ing to sin is considered solicitation if it is made in the confessional or in any manner connected with confession. The person solicited is bound under severe penalty to report the case to the bishop. A person who wantonly refuses to report a case of solicitation is to be refused absolution. False accusation of solicitation in the confessional is also reserved in a special manner to the Pope.

Ordinarily, a priest must write to Rome for faculties to absolve from cases reserved to the Pope. However, bishops generally have special privileges by which they can grant faculties to absolve from papal cases. Special faculties are sometimes granted to priests during the time of jubilees and missions to absolve from reserved cases. Missionaries usually have extraordinary faculties to absolve from reserved sins.

Bishops have authority to reserve

twelve grievous sins in their diocese. Most matrimonial cases are reserved to the bishop. These are tentative marriage before another than a priest, seeking divorce in a civil court, and separation without the permission of the ecclesiastical authority. Incest is often reserved. Cases of religious vows and the like are reserved.

The confessor is bound by the most stringent laws. Holy Church has ever sought to guard and protect the sanctity of the confessional. The ministers of the Sacraments are all sons of Adam. The Church makes laws to protect the Sacraments against the weakness of human nature. Amongst the many thousands of priests throughout the world there are men of diverse characters.

No confessor can absolve his accomplice in sin. He would be excommunicated if he attempted to absolve from this sin of complicity. Even after he

received absolution through permission from Rome he would never again be allowed to hear confessions.

The priest must be in the state of grace when he administers the Sacraments. He commits a sacrilege if he administers a Sacrament when he is in mortal sin. However, the Sacrament is valid. Should an unfortunate priest be in sin when he gives absolution he absolves his penitent from his sins, but adds a sacrilege to his own soul.

The priest bears a grave responsibility in the confessional. He must answer to God for every confession he hears. He must be well versed in the law so that his decisions will be correct. He is bound to absolve those who are rightly disposed. He is also bound to refuse absolution to the unworthy, no matter what the consequence may be. He must impose a proper penance upon his penitents. He must demand

that restitution be made where necessary. He must require reconciliation between the estranged. He must demand forgiveness of injuries. He must see that his penitents make amends for calumnies and detractions.

There is no other confidence so sacred on earth as that which the faithful make when they kneel and tell the secrets of their soul to the priest in confession. Holy Church guards the secret of the confessional with all her authority. The priest is bound to die rather than reveal the secret of confession. Outside the confessional the priest can not even speak of sins to the person who confessed them.

If a person gives the priest permission to speak of his sin, he may do so. This may be done for the sake of another person concerned in the matter. The priest can not reveal a penitent's sin, even when he is making his own confession to another priest.

He is even excused from confessing a sin which he can not tell without breaking the seal of confession.

If a priest learned in confession that he was to be murdered at a certain place he would not be allowed to use this knowledge to save himself. He would not be allowed to dismiss a servant who was preparing to rob him if he learned this fact from the confessional. Thus, he is bound to keep the seal of confession by word and action. He must guard it with his life and honor.

The priest is never allowed to ask the name of the penitent's accomplice. Nor is he permitted to inquire into such circumstances as would reveal the identity of the penitent's accomplice. Should he do so, he would commit a grave sin.

The work of the confessional is the most arduous that the priest has to perform. It requires great graces to

fulfil this great ministry faithfully. For many successive hours the priest sits in a little, unsanitary enclosure and listens to the sorrowful narratives of sin. Over and over again he pleads with sinners to abandon sin. He explains the heinousness of sin and the beauty of virtue. He gives advice. He warns against the near occasions of sin. He instructs the erring ones. He encourages the weaklings. He admonishes the thoughtless.

In the confessional the priest is indeed the spiritual father of his people. Here he fulfils a ministry so fruitful of good that even the angels of Heaven might envy his high prerogative. Here he is a true representative of Christ pleading with love to His people and saying: "Come to me all you that labor and are burdened and I will refresh you."[4]

[4] St. Matthew xi, 28.

CHAPTER VIII.

Indulgences.

SIN deprives us of God's friendship. It is an act of injustice against God. After our sin has been forgiven there still remains for us the obligation of making atonement to God. This atonement is called penance. Everyone indeed should do private penance. Everyone should, like holy David, "water his couch with tears" of penance.[1]

Yet the discipline of penance has ever belonged to the Church. In the early centuries the Church often imposed long and severe penances upon sinners. By this means she intended to obtain an atonement to God proportioned to the sin that had been

[1] Psalm vi, 7.

committed against Him. The Church never attempted to decide how much satisfaction God required for an offense committed against Him. That question has ever been left to the inscrutable ways of Divine Wisdom.

Penances often extended over a period of twenty years. Bishops sometimes dispensed the faithful in whole, or in part from these penances. This act of dispensation was called an Indulgence. If a bishop remitted one year from a penance imposed he was said to grant an indulgence of one year. If he remitted seven years he thus granted an indulgence of seven years. If he dispensed from the rigorous public penance required during Lent he thus granted an indulgence for one Lent or one Quarantine. Quarantine means the forty days of Lent. If he remitted part of the penance he granted a partial indulgence. If he

remitted the whole penance he granted a plenary indulgence.

These indulgences were granted because of some special disposition of the penitent or because of some good work he had performed. The bishop who granted an indulgence did not intend to curtail the satisfaction God requires for sin. He simply used his apostolic authority to apply from the treasury of the Church the amount of satisfaction required to make up for the atonement remitted by the indulgence. So much of the satisfaction for sin made by Christ and the saints as the penitent would have made by this extra amount of penance was applied to his soul.

Thus an indulgence is not a remission of sin. Nor does it remit the guilt of sin nor the eternal punishment of sin. The guilt and the eternal punishment of sin are remitted by the grace of God through perfect contrition and the

Sacrament of Penance. An indulgence remits at least part of the temporal punishment due to sin.

To gain an indulgence we must first be in the state of grace. Thus absolution was granted in the early Church at the beginning of public penances. It was considered a great grace to be admitted to the ranks of public penitents in those days. A sublime example is related in the case of the Emperor Theodosius. This great prince had massacred many of his subjects out of revenge for the murder of certain officers. When he appeared at the door of the church St. Ambrose, bishop of Milan, forbade him to enter. "Sin is effaced by tears only," said the saint. "No angel, no archangel can remit it on any other condition. The Lord Himself forgives those alone who do penance. I advise, entreat, warn thee to submit to it."

On Christmas day the emperor was

in his palace weeping; when asked why he wept he said: "I am weeping at the thought that God's house is open to beggars, but it is shut to me and that hence Heaven is also shut to me." When the emperor went to the church and begged to have public penance imposed upon him, St. Ambrose learned of his deep sorrow. He remitted the first part of the penance. He granted him an indulgence from that part of the penance which consisted in standing outside of the church and admitted him into the church. Here the emperor laid aside his imperial robes and prostrated himself on the pavement of the church. Thus this great ruler performed the penance that was imposed upon him.

The Church can impose penances to be performed in atonement for sins that have been forgiven. Hence she can dispense from these penances. She can grant indulgences. She can

remit the temporal punishment due to sin. This authority comes from the power which Christ bestowed upon His Apostle: "Amen, I say to you, whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth shall be loosed also in heaven."[2] Here Christ gives His Apostles power to bind and loose the temporal punishment due to sin. He gives them power to grant indulgences.

Pope Clement VI, A. D. 1349, explains the nature of indulgences: "Christ the innocent immolated on the cross did not merely shed one little drop of blood. One tiny drop of His blood would indeed have sufficed for the redemption of the human race because of His divine nature. Yet He poured forth His blood in a copious flow for He was bruised and wounded

[2] St. Matthew xviii, 18.

from the soles of His feet to the top of His head. Hence that the mercy of so great a shedding of blood might not be empty, in vain, or superfluous, He gave a treasury to His Church upon earth. He was a loving father Who wished to lay up treasures for His children. He gave to men an infinite treasure so that those who drew therefrom might become partakers of God's friendship.

"He did not tie up this treasure in a napkin, nor did He hide it in a field. He committed it to Blessed Peter, the key-bearer of Heaven, and to his successors. They were to dispense it carefully to the faithful. They were sometimes to grant a partial, sometimes a total remission of the temporal punishment due to sin. They were to apply these indulgences in general or in particular to the truly penitent who had confessed their sins. This was

to be done with mercy and prudence according to God's will. The Blessed Mother of God and all the saints from the first saintly person to the last have all contributed their share of merit to this treasury."[3]

[3] Ch. Pesch. Prael. Dogm., vol. VII, p. 223.

CHAPTER IX.

The Treasury of Indulgence.

INDULGENCES rest upon the idea that one person can make atonement for another. Penance is twofold in character. It may be mere satisfaction for sin. It may also be a remedy to turn the sinner from affection for sin and lead him back to the love of God. This remedial form of penance can not be performed by one person for another. It must be performed by the sinner himself.

But penance as a satisfaction for sin can be applied to others than those who perform it. Upon this principle rests the very doctrine of Redemption. If one person could not make atonement for another's sin then Christ could not have died for our sins. Then His death would have been vain.

All Christians admit the value of Christ's atonement for our sins. In fact, most Protestants hold that Christ atoned so completely for our sins that there is no need for penance on our part. The price of Christ's Redemption would indeed be sufficient to redeem a million sinful races. Yet sin is a perverse act of the human will. Man is accountable for the free act of his will.

Penance is also an act of atonement that proceeds from man's free will. It can not be supposed that God would have required no more than a mere feeling of repentance from beings that are capable of making satisfaction. Man makes amends to man when he wishes to be reconciled. Surely then man should make amends to God when he wishes to be reconciled to Him.

Christ did more than was absolutely necessary for the redemption of man. One single drop of His sacred blood

would have redeemed the whole human race. Yet Christ can do nothing in vain. Every pang that He suffered, every word that He spoke, every deed He performed bore with it treasures of merit with God the Father. This merit could not be lost; it could not be buried. It was stored up in a great treasury and entrusted to the care of Christ's Church.

Many of the saints, too, performed great deeds of love and penance that were not necessary for their own salvation. The spotless Mother of Christ led a life of love and suffering. Her life was filled with almost boundless merits with God. The Apostles, St. Paul, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Aloysius, St. Teresa and a countless multitude of other saints led lives of heroic virtue and penance.

All these works could not have been vain and fruitless. The saints themselves had no need of these super-

abundant merits. These superabundant works of love and charity indeed have great worth with God. They can also be applied for the sins of others. God is a just creditor; all men are His debtors. If some have not enough to pay their own debt, God accepts payment from others who willingly offer it. The saints so loved God that each one of them would gladly have paid the price of all men's sins.

The Church is one in Christ. All the members of the Church are united in Christ as in one body. "In one spirit were we all baptized into one body," says St. Paul. ". . . And if one member suffer anything, all the members suffer with it; or if one member glory, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and members of member."[1]

The doctrine of indulgences flows from the doctrine of the Communion

[1] I Epistle to the Corinthians xii, 13-27.

of Saints. According to this doctrine all the members of Christ's Church are united in the closest bonds of love. The faithful on earth pray for the souls in Purgatory. The glorified in Heaven pray for those on earth and those in Purgatory. The suffering in Purgatory also pray for those on earth. Thus Christ founded His Church upon the very principle of love.

Our faith would be cold indeed if we could not share in one another's spiritual treasures. Men may share their earthly treasures with their fellow man. The rich man can give to the poor. This would be a cruel world indeed if everyone were bound to cast his superfluous goods into the depths of the ocean. So, too, would Holy Church be a city of selfishness rather than a kingdom of love if those who are rich in merits could not help those who are sunken in the dire poverty of sin.

To partake in the merits of others does not mean that these merits become our own. The satisfaction made by these merits is applied to us.

Any individual may apply his works of satisfaction for another. They belong to him; he may apply them as he will. However, this is not an indulgence. This is an act of Christian love. Indulgences are granted only by the proper authorities in the Church. They are drawn from the treasury of the Church. No one can draw from a public treasury except he who has authority.

In the early days of the Church the martyrs often made a solemn transference to others of the satisfaction they were to make by their suffering and death. "The excommunicated apostates, impelled by remorse of conscience and supported by hope of pardon, sought admittance to the prisons and threw themselves on their knees

before the martyrs, entreating these friends of God to grant them a share in the merits they had won and so to help in opening the door of heaven to them. The martyrs, only too glad to act the part of advocates in behalf of their fallen brethren, gave them a small paper or ticket, known by the name of Libellus Martyrum, which was handed to the bishop. He examined it and, if he judged it expedient, readmitted the penitent sinner to communion with the Church.

"Thus the martyrs became surety for the penitents. They actually offered their own merits in payment for the debts of the lapsed, and the Church consented to accept the substitution out of respect for the noblest and most illustrious portion of her flock. 'Filling up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ in the flesh of her children, for his body,'[2] which

[2] Epistle to the Colossians i, 24.

is none other than herself, the Church dispensed the deserters from going through the whole of their penance and received them as prodigal sons back to her arms."[3]

Satisfaction is an external act. Hence, it can be transferred to others. Contrition can not be transferred because it is an internal act. Confession, too, is an internal act of submission externally expressed. It can not be transferred. Satisfaction may be transferred even though the sinner be able to satisfy for his own sins. The Church is like a great family in which all the members are harmoniously united. They share one another's joys and sorrows. They help one another. They possess all their goods in common.

The doctrine of indulgences throws much light on the mystery of suffering. Sin brought sorrow and suffering into

[3] Lepicier, Indulgences. Translated from Italian, Benziger Bros., 1906.

the world. Suffering is the only expiation for sin. The sinner rebels against God. To expiate his treason he must suffer. Suffering is the only means by which man can make reparation to God for the injustice he has committed against Him.

It also calls down the mercy of God upon sinners. No moment of suffering was ever undergone in vain. It all benefits the Church. It is the wages of one member in the household of Faith. Whatever remains over and above that which he needs for his own salvation is stored up in the common treasury. From this fund of spiritual riches the Church draws out when she sees fit to favor some of her weaker children. She grants them an Indulgence.

CHAPTER X.

The Granting of Indulgences.

INDULGENCES can be granted by the authority of the Church alone. In the early Church all bishops seem to have granted indulgences. However, this authority belongs, in a special manner, to the Pope. Bishops receive authority from the Pope to grant certain partial indulgences.

There is a treasury of satisfaction in the Church. Hence, the Church must have authority to distribute these satisfactions. The satisfaction made by Christ is distributed to the faithful primarily through the Sacraments and the Sacrifice of the Mass. Yet it is also distributed by indulgences.

The satisfaction made by the saints is never applied through the Sacra-

ments or through the Sacrifice of the Mass. Indulgences are the only means by which their satisfaction can be applied to the faithful. However, the Church did not receive the power to grant indulgences because of the merits of the saints, but because of Christ's merits.

Christ indeed promised all the Apostles the power to loose from the temporal punishments due to sin. "Whatever you shall loose upon earth shall be loosed also in Heaven."[1] Yet He gave this power to St. Peter in a special manner: "Whatever thou shalt loose upon earth," He says, "it shall be loosed also in Heaven."[2]

The treasury of satisfaction for sin belongs to the whole Church. It does not belong to any diocese in particular. Hence, the chief Pastor of the Church has jurisdiction over this treasury.

[1] St. Matthew xviii, 18.
[2] St. Matthew xvi, 19.

The other bishops can have only a delegated jurisdiction in special cases.

Though the Pope has complete jurisdiction over the spiritual treasury of the Church, he can not grant indulgences arbitrarily. He must grant them according to the mind of the Church guided by the Holy Ghost. He can not grant an indulgence to the unworthy. He can not grant an indulgence to the impenitent, nor to those who refuse to fulfil the conditions for gaining it.

The Pope must always have a motive for granting an indulgence. However, if he grants a great indulgence to which a very slight condition is attached there need be no doubt about the indulgence.

Conditions are always enjoined for gaining an indulgence. Yet we do not merit the indulgence by performing the work prescribed. The work prescribed is a condition upon which we

can gain the indulgence. A plenary indulgence is attached to the recital after Communion of a short prayer before a crucifix. This seems to be a very slight condition for such a great indulgence. However, the indulgence does not depend on the value of the work for its validity. The validity arises from the authority of him who grants it.

Indulgences do not add to our merits and rewards with God. They remit or loosen the temporal punishment due to sin. Yet they are not intended to do away with the practice of penance. By granting indulgences the Church wishes to arouse us to greater fervor in the practices of Faith. She wishes to shower upon us the blessings of God's love so that we may love and honor Him more devotedly.

There are several kinds of indulgences. Those granted to certain persons because of their position or work,

such as professed religious or missionaries, are called personal indulgences. Those attached to certain objects, such as rosaries, crosses and medals are called real indulgences. Those granted for visiting certain places are called local indulgences.

Indulgences granted for a specified time are called temporary indulgences. Those granted for an indefinite period of time are called perpetual indulgences. Above all, indulgences are divided into partial and plenary indulgences. A plenary indulgence remits all the temporal punishment due to sin. A partial indulgence remits part of the temporal punishment due to sin.

Indulgences may be applied to the souls in Purgatory. They are applied to them by way of suffrage. The Church has no direct jurisdiction over the souls in Purgatory. Hence, she can not directly grant an indulgence

to the souls in Purgatory. When she permits the faithful to apply an indulgence to them, she does not maintain that the suffering souls gain the whole benefit of the indulgence.

She teaches that they receive whatever God accepts in satisfaction for their sins. If a plenary indulgence is applied to a soul in Purgatory it does not follow that all his temporal punishment has been remitted. The souls in Purgatory always profit by the indulgences that are applied to them. Yet we can not know to what extent they profit by them.

When the proper conditions are fulfilled, an indulgence always produces its full effect for the living. Yet we can never be certain that we have had the proper dispositions for gaining an indulgence. Hence, it is well to gain as many indulgences as possible. Several plenary indulgences may be gained in one day. The person gaining them

has indeed no need of so many complete remissions of the temporal punishment due to his sins. Yet if he tries to gain many plenary indulgences he may be more certain to gain one. Most plenary indulgences, too, are applicable to the souls in Purgatory. If the person gaining them has no need of them he may apply them to the poor souls.

When the Church grants an indulgence, she sometimes uses the form: "An indulgence from the guilt and penalty of thy sin." By this the Church intends to say that the power is granted to priests to absolve from the guilt of sin in the Sacrament of Penance. When the Pope grants such an indulgence, he bestows upon priests the faculty of absolving from censures and reserved sins. After the sin has been forgiven, the indulgence remits the temporal punishment that remains.

The Church in all ages has granted

indulgences at the consecration of churches. They are also granted at the canonization of saints. Great indulgences have been granted for pilgrimages to the Holy Land. The Church granted a plenary indulgence to all who took part in the Crusades. Enlistment in this holy cause was to take the place of all works of penance. This wrought a great change in the discipline of the Church.

"There is no doubt whatever that the Crusades gave the final blow to canonical penances. . . . Whatever may have been the cause, whether change of habits, weakening of constitution, or cooling of fervor, it is certain that the movement for putting aside the ancient canons grew stronger and stronger, until a time came, about the beginning of the twelfth century, when they were a dead letter, a relic of the past, a study for historians instead of a real practice.

"The acts and canons of Councils, at that period, show how deeply the Church regretted this state of things, and how hard she tried to remedy it by protests, and even by promulgating censures. . . .

"But the Church, like her divine Master, will not lay insupportable burdens on men's shoulders: 'her yoke is sweet and her burden light.'[3] She can adapt her discipline to the needs of a particular period and to human weakness."[4]

A plenary indulgence may be gained by all the faithful during a Jubilee. The conditions are visits to certain specified churches, confession and communion and a prayer for the intention of the Pope. It also generally includes the giving of alms.

No one can gain an indulgence unless he be in the state of grace. However,

[3] St. Matthew xi, 30.

[4] Lepicier, Indulgences, p. 346 (Benziger Bros., 1906).

a person may perform the works enjoined even though he be in the state of sin. He may make his confession after he has performed the other works enjoined. He can thus gain the indulgence.

Pope Boniface VIII declared the first Jubilee in the year 1300. They were to recur every one hundred years. Afterwards they were declared every fifty years. Then the interval was reduced to thirty-three years. Afterwards it was reduced to twenty-five years. The Pope sometimes proclaims a Jubilee at the occasion of some extraordinary solemnity. At first the Jubilee applied only to the City of Rome. Later it was extended to the whole world.

Ordinary indulgences are generally suspended during the Jubilee year. However, indulgences for the dead are not suspended. The Jubilee indulgences afford for all ample opportunity

to obtain remission of the temporal punishment due to their sins.

The ceremony of opening the "Holy Door" is carried out at Rome on Christmas Eve at the beginning of the Jubilee year. This is one of the doors on the porticos of St. Peter's. The Pope strikes the door three times with a silver hammer, saying: "Open to us the doors of justice." Afterwards the Cardinal Penitentiarius strikes the door twice in the same manner. This symbolizes that the gates of Heaven are open in a special manner to the faithful. It is a time when Holy Church is, as it were, lavish with the spiritual treasures that have been entrusted to her.

The Church has never, in all her history, sold an indulgence for a price. Amongst the works enjoined almsgiving is often enjoined. Indulgences were granted by Popes Julius II and Leo X to all who contributed toward

the building of St. Peter's basilica. The building of this magnificent church was undertaken for the glory of God and the edification of the faithful. Hence, it was a holy work. Well might the Pope grant an indulgence to all who helped in this pious undertaking.

In granting these indulgence the Pope never promised to liberate souls from Purgatory for certain sums of money. Nor did he pretend to forgive sins for money. He granted to all who helped in this good work an indulgence which would remit or lessen the temporal punishment due to their sins.

A plenary indulgence for the dead is attached to a "privileged altar." The altar of St. Gregory at Rome bears the special privilege by which a plenary indulgence can be applied to the soul for whom Mass is celebrated. This privilege has been extended to many other altars throughout the world. These are called "privileged altars."

The Popes in granting this privilege declare that the soul to which the indulgence is applied is to be liberated from Purgatory. However, they do not intend to say that the soul is then and there delivered. They mean that if God accepts the indulgences in full remission for all temporal punishment, the soul will be delivered. The soul is in the hands of God.

When asked regarding this indulgence the Sacred Congregation replied: "If the intention of the Church and the use of the power of the keys be considered we must understand an indulgence that immediately delivers the soul from all the pains of purgatory; but if the effect of the application is considered then we must understand as indulgence the measure of which corresponds to the good pleasure and acceptance of Divine Mercy."[5]

This privilege of altar is sometimes

[5] Lepicier, Indulgences, p. 100 (Benziger Bros., 1906).

granted to priests for a specified time as a personal privilege. They may offer Mass for the dead and apply to them a plenary indulgence, no matter on what altar they celebrate.

Our suffrages infallibly reach the soul for which they were intended. Yet God alone knows whether or not these souls receive the full benefit of them. However, we may feel certain that God in His tender mercy grants them all that the Church bestows upon them.

From the fifth century priests were appointed in certain churches to care for the penitential discipline. Such a priest was called the "penitentiarius." The Council of Trent prescribed that there should be a penitentiarius in every cathedral. He should be charged especially to administer the Sacrament of Penance.

In Rome the penitentiarius holds a long rod, called a ferula. With this

he touches the penitent who kneels before him. This signifies liberation from sin. It is probably derived from the old Roman custom by which the lictor placed his rod on the slave that was to be freed.

The Sacred Congregation of Relics and Indulgences at Rome examines all the matters that pertain to indulgences throughout the world. It solves difficulties, enacts laws and corrects abuses in the matter of indulgences. Very important matters are referred to the Pope before a decision is given out.

This Congregation has published a collection of prayers and other good works to which the Holy See has attached indulgences. This is called the Raccolta. This book is very useful to the pious Christian.

It is difficult to comprehend fully the great blessing of indulgences. After the Sacraments, Christ has bestowed

no greater grace upon his Church than the power to grant indulgences. Indulgences open up to us a treasury of infinite spiritual value. Compared to this marvelous treasury, all the millions of the world's riches are as nothing.

CHAPTER XI.

The Sacrament of Extreme Unction.

"IS any man sick amongst you?" writes the Apostle St. James, "let him bring in the priests of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick man: and the Lord shall raise him up: and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him."[1] No Sacrament is more clearly described in Holy Writ than the Sacrament of Extreme Unction. St. James here outlines the Sacrament in all its details.

Extreme Unction is intended for those who are dangerously ill. St. James refers to those who are so sick

[1] Epistle of St. James v, 14, 15.

that the priest should be called. The external sign of the Sacrament is the anointing with oil. This anointing with oil signifies the grace of strength which the sick person receives. The prayer of the priest is the form of the Sacrament. "Let them pray over him, anointing him with oil."

The Apostle also mentions the fact that the Sacrament is administered in the name of Christ as are all Sacraments. He says: "anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord." Then he says that the Sacrament will give him grace: "the prayer of faith shall save the sick man." Nay more, this grace comes from God: "And the Lord shall raise him up." He also mentions the fact that sins are sometimes forgiven in the Sacrament of Extreme Unction. "If he be in sin," he says, "they shall be forgiven him."

Christ instituted the Sacrament of Extreme Unction to bring grace and

strength and consolation into the last hours of our life on earth. It is in this solemn hour of death that we most need the grace of God. It is then we are preparing to appear before the Judgment Seat of God.

All human infirmity and sickness come from sin. It is but natural then that Christ in His love for man should have instituted a special Sacrament for those who are suffering from grave infirmity.

The Sacrament of Extreme Unction not only confers spiritual grace and strength, but sometimes restores the sick to bodily well-being. When God sees fit, He confers health and strength upon the body through this Sacrament.

The Apostles, whilst they walked with Christ, "anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them."[2] Undoubtedly, the Apostles were here

[2] St. Mark vi, 13.

exercising the gift of miracles. They healed the sick miraculously. The anointing with oil probably prefigured the Sacrament of Extreme Unction. They must have anointed these sick with the sanction of Christ.

Olive oil is used to anoint the sick in the Sacrament of Extreme Unction. It is the "oil of the sick," consecrated by the bishop on Holy Thursday. At the same time he consecrates the "oil of Catechumens" and holy Chrism. Priests are sometimes delegated to bless the "oil of the sick."

The Roman Ritual prescribes seven anointings for Extreme Unction. The eyes, the ears, the nostrils, the mouth, the hands, the feet, and the loins are to be anointed. The anointing of the loins is always omitted in the case of females. It is, therefore, not necessary for the validity of the Sacrament. An approved custom has also caused it to be omitted in the case of males.

When he administers the Sacrament of Extreme Unction, the priest first prays over the sick person. He begs the Lord to enter there and to send His holy angel to protect the sick person, invoking the intercession of all the angels and saints. Then he dips his thumb into the holy oils and makes the sign of the cross with oil upon the part he anoints. First, he anoints the eyelids of both eyes, saying: "May the Lord through this holy unction and His Own most tender mercy, pardon thee whatever sins thou hast committed through sight. Amen."

He next anoints the lobes of both ears, saying: "May the Lord through this holy unction and His Own most tender mercy, pardon thee whatever sins thou hast committed through hearing. Amen." Then he anoints the exterior of both nostrils, saying: "May the Lord through this holy unction and His Own tender mercy

pardon thee whatever sins thou hast committed through smell. Amen." Then he anoints both lips compressed together, saying: "May the Lord through this holy unction and His Own most tender mercy, pardon thee whatever sins thou hast committed through taste and speech. Amen."

Then he anoints the palms of both hands, saying: "May the Lord through this holy unction and His Own tender mercy, pardon thee whatever sins thou hast committed through touch. Amen." Next the priest anoints the soles of the feet, saying: "May the Lord through this holy unction and His Own most tender mercy, pardon thee whatever sins thou hast committed by walking. Amen."

A priest is anointed on the back of his hands when receiving Extreme Unction. His hands were anointed on the palms at ordination. The loins are anointed just over the kidneys. The

priest says: "May the Lord through this holy unction and His Own most tender mercy, pardon thee whatever sins thou hast committed through the delectation of thy loins. Amen." Finally several prayers are said over the sick person.[3]

In case of necessity one single unction may be used. If it is feared that the person may die before the Sacrament can be administered in its complete form, the priest may anoint the sick person on the head. He says at the same time: "May the Lord through this holy unction pardon thee whatever thou hast sinned. Amen."

No other than a priest or bishop can administer the Sacrament of Extreme Unction. The pastor of the place alone has the right to administer Extreme Unction to his parishoners. He may delegate other priests to administer the Sacrament. In case of neces-

[3] Roman Ritual.

sity, however, any priest may give Extreme Unction.

The pastor of souls is bound to administer the Sacraments to his subjects even at the risk of his own life. He can not, without treason to his calling, refuse to go to those who are afflicted even with the most repulsive, contagious disease. Nor can he, under any pretext, refuse Extreme Unction to a dying person who desires to receive the Sacrament worthily.

CHAPTER XII.

The Subject of Extreme Unction.

EVERY baptized person that has reached the use of reason may receive Extreme Unction. It is given to those only who are in danger of death from sickness or injury. The danger of death need not be grave. Any sickness or injury that sometimes proves fatal constitutes a sufficient reason for administering this Sacrament. The sick person should always have the benefit of the doubt.

The Sacrament of Extreme Unction can not be given to those who have never been capable of committing sin. Idiots and those who have been insane from childhood, can not receive this Sacrament. Extreme Unction is not to be given to the unconscious, if they remain impenitent to the last.

However, this Sacrament may be given to the unconscious if it is known that they had, at least, an implicit desire to receive it whilst they had the use of their senses. The Roman Ritual says: This Sacrament should be given to the sick who, whilst they possessed the use of their senses, asked for the Sacrament or probably would have asked for it, or who showed signs of contrition, even though they have lost the power of speech and have become insane or delirious." A probability that the sick person had contrition, suffices for the administration of Extreme Unction.

To receive Extreme Unction, the person must be actually suffering from serious injury or sickness. Extreme Unction can not be given to healthy persons who are about to undergo a grave danger to their life. It cannot be given to those who are about to be executed, nor to soldiers who are about

to engage in battle, nor to women who are about to enter the labors of childbirth. Any of these may, of course, receive the Sacrament if they are actually suffering from any serious ailment.

In the Greek Church the healthy are anointed with the oil of the sick. Yet this unction is not intended as the administration of Extreme Unction. It is a sacramental. It is generally conceded that Extreme Unction is invalid if it be conferred on the healthy or on those who are but slightly ill.

Extreme Unction is not absolutely necessary for salvation. There are other means by which the sick may put themselves in the state of grace. It would, however, be a grave sin to disdain this holy Sacrament. It bestows great graces on the languishing soul. It bestows the grace of courage and fortitude in the hour of death. It takes away the remains of sin. It

removes from the heart the affection for sin.

The Sacrament of Extreme Unction may be received more than once. However, it can be given but once in the same sickness. Yet if a person recovers and then relapses into the same illness, he may receive Extreme Unction again. For he is then in danger of death from a new cause though the sickness be specifically the same. Penance, Holy Eucharist, and Extreme Unction are conferred on those who are in danger of death. These are then called the last Sacraments. Holy Eucharist when given to the dying is called Holy Viaticum.

It is well to call the priest soon to those who are seriously ill. Delays are often dangerous. Everything should be set in order about the sick person before the priest arrives with the Blessed Sacrament. All should be as neat and tidy as possible. In

the sick room there should be a small table covered with a clean, white cloth. On this table should be placed two blessed candles in candlesticks, a crucifix, a glass of drinking water and a small spoon. Holy water and cotton may also be provided. Yet the priest generally carries these with him.

When the priest arrives all should kneel in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament as he enters. They should remain kneeling as long as they are in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. All should leave the sick room whilst the priest hears the sick person's confession. Then all should kneel and pray whilst the priest administers Holy Communion and Extreme Unction.

Afterwards the priest imparts the last blessing. In the blessing the priest, by apostolic authority, grants the dying person a plenary indulgence which he gains only at the moment of death.

This indulgence can not be gained by any person more than once.

When the end is drawing near the friends should kneel about the dying person and recite prayers and litanies for him. This is a Christian deathbed scene. Friends and loved ones kneel around and beg God to have mercy on him who is about to leave this world. They call upon the Blessed Mother of God and all the angels and saints to intercede for him. "Lord have mercy. Christ have mercy. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for him. All ye holy Patriarchs and prophets, pray for him. All ye holy Apostles and Evangelists, pray for him. All ye holy saints of God, make intercession for him. Be merciful, spare him, O Lord. Be merciful, O Lord, deliver him."

"Go forth, O Christian soul," the prayer continues, "from this world, in the name of the Father almighty, Who

created thee: in the name of Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, Who suffered for thee; in the name of the Holy Ghost, Who was poured forth upon thee: in the name of the angels and archangels, in the name of all the saints and martyrs: may thy place be this day in peace, and thine abode in holy Sion. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen."

CHAPTER XIII.

The Sacrament of Holy Orders.

HOLY Orders is a Sacrament through which priests and other ministers of the Church are ordained. Through this Sacrament they receive grace and power to fulfil the different offices of the sacred ministry. Holy Orders is conferred by the imposition of hands and the prayer of the bishop. The imposition of hands signifies the coming of the Holy Ghost upon the person ordained.

Holy Orders is one of the seven Sacraments instituted by Christ. The Apostles themselves ordained many priests and bishops. "And when they had ordained to them priests in every Church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord."[1]

[1] Acts of the Apostles, xiv, 22.

"And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith, and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte of Antioch. These they set before the Apostles: and they praying, imposed hands upon them."[2]

St. Paul testifies that grace was given by the imposition of hands: "Stir up the grace of God that is in thee by the imposition of my hands."[3] St. Paul ordained Timothy to the episcopate. Again, he says to him: "Neglect not the grace that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with imposition of the hands of the priesthood."[4] Hence, Holy Orders has all the requisites of a Sacrament. The imposition of hands is the external sign. It confers the grace it signifies. The form is the prayer of the bishop.

[2] Acts of the Apostles vi, 5, 6.
[3] II Epistle to Timothy i, 6.
[4] I Epistle to Timothy iv, 14.

"The priesthood is indeed exercised upon earth," says St. John Chrysostom, "but it belongs to the class and order of heavenly things. That indeed is justly so, for no mortal, no angel, no archangel, no created power whatsoever, but the Paraclete arranged this order."[5]

Holy Orders is called the Sacrament of order. It is the Sacrament by which order and organization are established in the Church. "Order," says the Roman Catechism, "if we accept the proper force and idea of the word, is the disposition of things superior and inferior, which are so arranged that each is in its proper position to the other. Since then in the ecclesiastical ministry there are many grades and various functions, all of which are definitely distributed and arranged, it is rightly and fitly called Order."[6]

[5] De Sacerdotio, Lib. iii, p. 202, Paris, 1687.

[6] Part 2, x. 7, n. 9.

It is but proper that Christ should have instituted a special Sacrament for those who were to exercise His ministry on earth. They are called to fulfil a supernatural mission. They could not perform this great work without special graces. They are leaders of Christ's people, shepherds of His flock. Hence, they are distinguished by a special character. They are consecrated forever to the service of Christ. They partake of Christ's Own priesthood.

Christ instituted the Sacrament of Holy Orders partly before His passion, when at the Last Supper He gave His Apostles the power of consecration. He completed it after His resurrection when He gave them power to forgive sins, and when He constituted them pastors of His Church.

It is probable that Christ instructed His Apostles about this during those

forty days in which "He showed Himself to them alive, appearing and speaking about the kingdom of God."[7] Christ did not immediately ordain ministers of every order. He simply ordained bishops because all other orders are contained in this.[8]

The ministry of the Church is divided into eight degrees or orders. There are four minor orders. They are: Ostiarii, lectors, exorcists, and acolytes. There are three major orders. They are: Subdeacons, deacons, and priests. Then there are bishops. They possess the plenitude of the priesthood.

[7] Acts of the Apostles i, 3.

[8] Ch. Pesch. Prael, Dogm., vol. VII, p. 285, Herder, 1909.

CHAPTER XIV.

Minor Orders.

TONSURE is a ceremony that precedes the conferring of Orders. It is not a Sacrament. It is a ceremony by which candidates are admitted to the ranks of those who are to receive Orders. It consists in cutting away the hair from the crown of the head. The tonsure is worn by all priests and bishops in Catholic countries.

Certain religious wear a tonsure which consists in shaving all the head, leaving only a band of hair about an inch wide around the head. This represents the crown of thorns worn by Christ. It marks clerics as being set aside from the world in a special manner to follow Christ.

When the bishop gives tonsure, he

cuts a lock of hair from the front, from the back and from the two sides of the head and a few hairs from the top of the head. Meanwhile the candidate says: "The Lord is the part of my inheritance and my chalice; thou art who restorest my inheritance to me."[1]

Minor Orders are given to those who are to receive Holy Orders later. The Minor Orders are mentioned in the early literature of the Church. Hence it is certain that they have existed from the beginning.

The Ostiarii are porters. In the early centuries they guarded the doors of the churches. It was their duty to see that no unbaptized or excommunicated persons entered during the celebration of Mass. They also rang the bells and prepared the book for the priest.

When the bishop confers the order

[1] Psalm xv, 5.

of the ostiarii, he gives the keys of the church to each candidate saying: "So act as if you were about to render account of those things that are locked up by these keys."

Lectors in the ancient Church were special assistants to the priests and bishops. They read the Holy Scriptures to the people. They were empowered to bless bread and new fruits.

When the bishop confers the order of lectors, he hands the book of the Gospels to each candidate and says: "Receive and be bearers of God's word. If you faithfully and with utility fulfil your office, you will have part with those who have well administered the Word of God from the beginning."

Exorcists receive power to cast out demons. Possession by the demons was very common in the time of Christ and during the earlier ages of the Church. When the bishop confers

this order he gives each candidate a book to touch. This book contains prayers for exorcism. He says: "Receive, and keep in mind, have power to impose hands upon the possessed whether they are baptized or catechumens."

Exorcism or casting out devils is practiced in the false religions of the East as an act of superstition. The act of exorcism used in the Church since the time of Christ in no way resembles this practice. Devils are cast out by prayer and abjuration in the name of Christ. In the early Church even lay persons often cast out devils by abjuring them in the name of Christ.

According to the present discipline of the Church public exorcism can not be exorcised, even by a priest, without the permission of the bishop. The idea of demoniac possession is often ridiculed by modern writers.

It is looked upon as a vestige of ignorant superstition. It was thus the Pharisees accused Christ of superstition when He cast out devils: "This man casteth not out devils but by Beelzebub, the prince of devils."[2]

Acolyte literally means one who follows. Acolytes carry lights and accompany the deacon when he reads the Gospel. They also assist the subdeacon in giving bread and wine. They carry candles during the solemn celebration of Mass. When the bishop confers the order of acolytes he gives each candidate a candlestick containing a candle. He says: "Receive the candlestick with the candle and learn to devote yourselves to lighting the lamps of the Church in the name of the Lord. Amen."

The offices of the Minor Orders are no longer exercised by ordained ministers. Exorcism and reading the Scrip-

[2] St. Matthew xii, 24.

tures are carried out by the priests. The other ministrations that belong properly to Minor Orders are fulfilled by lay persons. Altar boys serve Mass and janitors care for the church. Minor Orders are generally conferred upon theological students after the first or second year of theology.

CHAPTER XV.

Major Orders.

THE subdiaconate is the lowest of the three Major Orders. Subdeacons are assistants to the deacons. Subdeacons are bound to celibacy. The obligation is included in their ordination. They are also bound to the recitation of the Divine Office. The offices of deacon and subdeacon are today but steps to the priesthood. These offices are generally fulfilled by priests at Solemn High Mass. Students are usually ordained subdeacons and deacons during the last year of their studies. They may, of course, exercise these orders when occasion arises.

The diaconate is the second step in Major Orders. No one but a subdeacon can be ordained deacon. The

diaconate is a Sacrament. The Roman Pontifical says: "The deacon should administer at the altar, baptize and preach." The chief office of deacons has always been to assist the priest at Mass. Deacons may baptize today only with the bishop's consent.

In the early Church the deacons had charge of the charities and temporal ministrations of the Church. The Apostles ordained the first deacons. "Then the twelve calling together the multitude of disciples, said: It is not reason that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business."[1]

The deacons were not appointed for the work of charity alone. The Acts relate how St. Stephen defended the Faith against members of the syna-

[1] Acts of the Apostles vi, 2-3.

gogue.[2] Deacons are ordained with the imposition of hands by the bishop.

There were deaconesses in the early Church. St. Paul says: "I command to you Phoebe, our sister, who is in the ministry of Church that is in Cenchrae."[3] In another place, the Apostle describes the qualities they should possess: "Let a widow be chosen of no less than threescore years of age, who hath been the wife of one husband. Having testimony of her good works, if she have brought up children, if she have received to harbor, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have ministered to them that suffer tribulation, if she have diligently followed every good work."[4]

"Elect a deaconess, holy and faithful for the ministry of women. . . . A deaconess indeed is a useful woman.

[2] Acts vi, 9.
[3] Epistle to the Romans xvi, 1.
[4] I Epistle to Timothy v, 9, 10.

When women are baptized, let the deacon anoint only their forehead with holy oil, and let the deaconess afterwards spread the ointment. . . . Let no woman visit a deacon or a bishop without a deaconess." These are some of the instructions that are contained in the ancient manuscript known as the "Apostolic Constitutions."

Though deaconesses were consecrated, they in no wise pertained to the clergy. They took no part in the divine ministry of the Church. Archdeaconesses are mentioned in history. They were simply superioresses of the deaconesses. The duties formerly performed by deaconesses are now fulfilled by nuns.

The priesthood is the third of the Major Orders. The priesthood is a Sacrament. Three Major Orders are Sacraments: The diaconate, the priesthood and the episcopate. Yet they

are not different Sacraments. They all form the Sacrament of Holy Orders. Each order impresses a special character on the candidate and each bestows special graces for the performance of the obligations it imposes.

St. Peter exhorts the priests to do their duty well. "The ancients therefore, that are among you, I beseech, who am myself also an ancient, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ; as also a partaker of that glory which is to be revealed in time to come: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking care of it, not by constraint, but willingly, according to God: and not for filthy lucre's sake, but voluntarily: Neither as lording it over the clergy, but being made a pattern of the flock from the heart."[5] The Roman Pontifical says: "A priest should offer sacrifice, bless, rule, preach and baptize."

[5] I Epistle of St. Peter v, 1-3.

Priests receive a sacramental character in ordination. A priest can never become a layman. He is a priest forever. Hence, "ex-priest" is a misnomer. Those who fall from their high station and abandon their sacred calling are still priests no matter how shameful their lives may be.

The ordination of priests is a beautiful solemnity. The candidates stand before the bishop who is seated at the altar. The archdeacon says: "Most Reverend Father, our Holy Mother, the Catholic Church, asks that these deacons present be ordained to the burden of the priesthood." The bishop says: "Dost thou know that they are worthy?" "In so far as human frailty permits us to know," answers the archdeacon, "I both know and testify that they are worthy to receive the burden of this office." "Thanks be to God," replies the bishop.

Then the bishop announces to the

clergy and to the people present that he is about to ordain the deacons. He asks them to speak if they know anything against any of the candidates. Then he addresses the deacons who are to be made priests. He warns them of the great responsibility they are about to assume. He tells them the high character and the virtues and the sanctity that is required of them. Here the candidates prostrate themselves on their faces before the altar and the Litany of the Saints is chanted.

Then the bishop imposes hands upon the candidates. Afterwards the priests also impose hands upon them. The bishop reads several prayers. He adjusts the stole across the breast of each in the form of a cross, saying: "Receive the yoke of the Lord; for His yoke is sweet and His burden light." Then he places upon each the chasuble folded on the shoulders. "Receive,"

he says, "the sacerdotal garment that signifies charity and a perfect work."

After a prayer and the hymn "Come, Holy Ghost," the bishop anoints their hands with the oil of catechumens. The holy oil is spread on the palms of their hands. It is for this reason that the people kiss the palms of a newly ordained priest's hands when he gives his first blessing. During the anointing, the bishop says: "Deign, O Lord, to consecrate and sanctify these hands through this anointing and our blessing."

Then making the sign of the cross on the hands of each, he says: "That whatever they bless may be blessed, and whatever they consecrate may be consecrated and sanctified in the name of the Lord, Jesus Christ." Both hands of each candidate are then bound together with a linen cloth. The bishop then gives to each the chalice containing wine and water together with the paten upon which is

an altar-bread. These they must touch with their fingers. The bishop meanwhile says to each: "Receive the power to offer sacrifice to God, and to celebrate Masses both for the living and for the dead. In the name of the Lord."

Then the bishop begins Mass. The newly ordained kneel near the altar and offer the Holy Sacrifice with the bishop. They say the words of the Mass simultaneously with the bishop. This is a relic of the Apostolic age when the bishop usually said Mass assisted by several priests who offered the Holy Sacrifice in unison with him.

After the Communion all make the profession of Faith and then solemnly promise obedience to the bishop. Before the promise, the bishop says to each: "Receive the Holy Ghost, whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven: and whose sins you shall retain they are retained." Then dropping

the chasuble from the shoulders of each, he says: "May the Lord clothe thee with the stole of innocence." Then the bishop, holding each new priest's hands between his own, kisses him and says: "May the peace of the Lord be ever with thee."

It is sometimes said that all Christians are called priests in the Scriptures. "You are a chosen generation," says St. Peter, "a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people."[6] The Roman Catechism explains these words: "A twofold priesthood is mentioned in Holy Writ. The one is interior, the other is exterior. . . . As to the interior priesthood all the faithful, after they have been baptized, are called priests. Especially the just who have the Spirit of God.

"By the favor of divine grace they become living members of Jesus Christ the High Priest. Moved by faith and

[6] I Epistle of St. Peter ii, 9.

inflamed by charity, they immolate on the altar of their minds spiritual victims to God. All good and pious deeds that give glory to God are enumerated as spiritual victims: 'Be ye also as living stones built up, a spiritual sacrifice, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.' . . . The external priesthood does not belong to the multitude of the faithful, but to certain men who are established by the legitimate imposition of hands and the solemn ceremonies of holy Church and consecrated to God for a certain definite and sacred ministry."[7]

Priestesses have been mentioned in history. The wives of married priests were sometimes called priestesses. Even today the wives of Greek priests are sometimes called priestesses. The name was at times used for the superiors of the deaconesses. Women have never been admitted to Holy Orders.

[7] Part II, c. 7, n. 23.

The female sex has always been excluded even from tonsure and minor orders. Women are not even permitted to enter the church with uncovered heads.[8] Nor are they permitted to speak in the church: "Let women keep silence in the churches; for it is not permitted them to speak, but to be subject, as also the law saith."[9]

None other than a bishop can ordain priests. To ordain licitly he must have the proper jurisdiction. Yet even a bishop who has fallen away from the Church can ordain validly. Thus Anglican Orders would have been valid had they been conferred, with the proper form and intention, by real bishops. The "Orthodox Church" separated from the true Church by schism and heresy has validly ordained priests and bishops. A simple priest may be delegated by the Pope

[8] I Epistle to the Corinthians xi, 5-10.
[9] I Epistle to the Corinthians xiv, 34.

to confer Minor Orders and the subdiaconate.

The highest of the three major orders is the episcopate. This order is considered the perfection of the priesthood. Bishops alone can administer all the seven Sacraments. Priests are ordinary ministers of but five Sacraments. They are sometimes constituted extraordinary ministers of Confirmation. They, however, can never administer Holy Orders.

In the early ages of the Church bishops were often called priests. Yet the Fathers distinguished them from simple priests. They called the bishops priests of the first order and simple priests priests of the second order.

The episcopate is of divine institution. Christ ordained the Apostles bishops. They in turn consecrated other bishops. Priests have never tried to claim for themselves the power

to consecrate bishops and to ordain priests. In this clearly appears the distinction of orders between bishops and priests. Then priests have always been subject to bishops. This indicates the superior jurisdiction of bishops.

The hierarchy of the Church consists of three orders. They are: Deacons, priests and bishops. This hierarchy is of divine origin. The Council of Trent says: "If anyone shall say that in the Catholic Church there is not a hierarchy instituted by divine ordination which consists of bishops, priests and ministers, let him be anathema."[10]

Three bishops take part in the consecration of a bishop. One is Consecrator and the other two are assistants. Hands are imposed upon the candidate. The book of the Gospels is given him. The consecrating bishop says: "Receive the Holy Ghost." Afterwards

[10] Canon 6, sess. 23.

he anoints the crown of his head with holy chrism in the form of a cross.

Meanwhile he says: "May thy head be anointed and consecrated by the celestial blessing in the episcopal order. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen." Then he anoints his hands with holy chrism, saying: "May those hands be anointed with sanctified oil and with the chrism of sanctification as Samuel anointed David king and prophet."

Then the crozier and ring and the other insignia of his office are blessed and solemnly conferred upon the new bishop.

The episcopate, the priesthood and the diaconate, all imprint a character on the soul in ordination. It is held by many that a new and distinct character is conferred with each of these three orders. This character remains in the soul forever.

CHAPTER XVI.

Excellence of the Priesthood.

THE Christian priesthood is the highest dignity to which mortal man can aspire. Christ established the priesthood to continue the work which He Himself began upon earth. According to His divine decree, man was to work out his own salvation. He was to use his own faculties to win for himself the grace of Redemption which Christ merited for him on the cross.

Christ went about for three years preaching to the people and teaching them the way of salvation. He was a benefactor to the multitude. He was a friend and consoler to the afflicted and the oppressed. He was a father to the poor, to the widows and

orphans. "Go," He said, "and relate to John what you have heard and seen. The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, the poor have the gospel preached to them."[1] Afterwards He declared: "I am the good shepherd and I lay down my life for my sheep."[2] Then He said to His Apostles: "As the Father hath sent me, I also send you."[3]

He sends forth His priests to fulfil the same mission that He had fulfilled. He sent them forth to speak in His Own name and person: "He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me."[4] They were to be His personal representatives. "He that receiveth you," He said, "receiveth me."[5] They were to spread His Gospel

[1] St. Matthew xi, 4, 5.
[2] St. John x, 14, 15.
[3] St. John xx, 21.
[4] St. Luke x, 16.
[5] St. Matthew x, 40.

and bear witness to Christ's teachings throughout the whole world. "He said to them: "Go into the whole world, and preach the gospel to every creature."[6] Again He said to them: "You shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you, and you shall be witnesses unto me in Jerusalem, and Samaria, and even to the uttermost part of the earth."[7]

"We know," says Cardinal Gibbons, "in what honor and what esteem God, in the old Dispensation, held His prophets, who were the teachers and expounders of the Law, the vindicators of Jehovah's rights and dominion among the people.

"The Almighty gave them prerogatives such as were not bestowed on earthly rulers and conquerors of nations. He lifted the veil, and disclosed to them a clear vision of futurity. In

[6] St. Mark xvi, 15.
[7] Acts of the Apostles i, 8.

response to their prayers, He suspended the laws of nature and enabled them to work miracles. He proclaimed their persons sacred and inviolable, so that he who touched them touched the apple of His eye. 'Touch not,' He said, 'My anointed, and do no evil to my prophets.'[8]

"Sometimes He inflicted summary chastisements on those that offered personal violence to His consecrated servants. King Jeroboam raises his arm to strike one of the prophets, and his hand instantly falls withered by his side. . . . Now the anointed preacher of the New Law inherits the office of the prophets and the Apostles. . . . I will even affirm, on the authority of St. Paul, that the priest is as much more exalted than were the prophets, as the New Covenant is more glorious than the Old. 'God,' says the Apostle, 'hath made us fit ministers

[8] I Paralipomenon xvi, 22.

of the New Testament, not in the letter, but in the spirit; for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. Now if the ministration of death engraven with letters on stones was glorious, how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be more glorious? For if the ministry of condemnation is glory, much more the ministry of justice aboundeth in glory.'[9]"[10]

The priesthood of the Old Law was a figure and shadow of the new priesthood. When the Old Dispensation gave way to the New, its priesthood also ceased and the Christian priesthood was instituted by Christ. In this new priesthood Christ is the High-Priest. "Having therefore a great high-priest that hath passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession."[11]

[9] II Epistle to the Corinthians iii, 6-9.

[10] The Ambassador of Christ, James, Cardinal Gibbons, p. 1-3, Murphy, 1896.

[11] Epistle to the Hebrews iv, 14.

For this reason the Apostle could say: "We are God's coadjutors."[12] Priests labor with Christ for the salvation of man. They are His vice-gerents upon earth. "For Christ therefore we are ambassadors. God as it were exhorting by us."[13]

The duty of priests is to preach the Gospel and labor for souls. "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, entreat, rebuke in all patience and doctrine . . . labor in all things to do the work of an evangelist, fulfil thy ministry."[14]

Priests are ordained to offer sacrifice and to offer external worship to God. "Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and the dispensers of the mysteries of God."[15] They offer sacrifice for the people. "For every high priest taken from among

[12] I Epistle to the Corinthians iii, 9.
[13] II Epistle to the Corinthians v, 20.
[14] II Epistle to Timothy iv, 2-5.
[15] I Epistle to the Corinthians iv, 1.

men, is ordained for men in the things that appertain to God, that he may offer up gifts and sacrifices for sins; who can have compassion on them that are ignorant and that err; because he himself also is compassed with infirmity."[16]

The priest is a father to his people. The prophet foretold the character of the faithful priest: "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather together the lambs with his arms, and shall take them up in his bosom."[17]

He receives the little ones just born into the world and regenerates them in the waters of Baptism. As they grow up, he feeds them with the heavenly bread of the Holy Eucharist. When they fall into sin he reconciles them to Christ in the Sacrament of Penance. "All things," says St. Paul, "are of God, who hath reconciled us

[16] Epistle to the Hebrews v, 1, 2.
[17] Isaias xl, 11.

to himself by Christ, and hath given us the ministry of reconciliation."[18]

The priest stands daily at the altar and offers up the Holy Sacrifice for his people. Day by day he takes the Immaculate Lamb in his hands and pleads for them. When sorrow and grief come upon them, the priest is near to comfort. He is there to strengthen the dying with the last Sacraments. He stands by the grave to bless even the lifeless bodies of his children that are gone.

The priesthood is an office of love and mercy. Mortal man is elevated to a position whence he can dispense to his brethren the treasures of divine love. Hence, the faithful priest shrinks from no labor or danger when he can bring blessings to his people. The priesthood is a life of toil and self-sacrifice. No one can fulfil this divine

[18] II Epistle to the Corinthians v, 18.

ministry without special graces from God.

Christ, knowing the trials and dangers to which His priests would be exposed, prayed fervently for them. "Holy Father," He said, "keep them in thy name, whom thou hast given me. . . . I have given them thy word, and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world."[19] Truly has the world of evil men hated the priesthood of Christ. When men turn away from God they despise His priests.

Many men who never knew a priest are filled with hatred for priests in general. Such men are often surprised when they learn the work of the priesthood. Suddenly they realize that their hatred has been built upon myths. Yet the true priest remembers the words of Christ to His Apostles: "You shall be hated by all men for my name's

[19] St. John xvii, 11-14.

sake; but he that shall persevere to the end, he shall be saved."[20]

Priests are weak, human mortals. They do not claim to be sanctified nor to be proof against sin. They are "compassed with infirmity."[21] The priest Judas betrayed his Master with a kiss. Most of the heresies in the Church were caused by priests. Luther was a priest.

Even the great St. Paul feared that he might fall. He cried out: "Lest perhaps, when I have preached to others I myself should become a castaway."[23] Christ Himself warned His disciples against temptation: "Watch ye and pray that you enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."[24] Again the Apostle says: "I see another law in my members, fighting against the

[20] St. Matthew x, 22.
[21] Epistle to the Hebrews v, 1, 2.
[23] I Epistle to the Corinthians ix, 27.
[24] St. Mark xiv, 38.

law of my mind, and captivating me in the law of sin, that is in my members. Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" He replies to his own question: "The grace of God, by Jesus Christ our Lord."[25]

The priesthood is one of God's greatest blessings to the world. God in His love for humanity elevates man to a dignity that makes him a mediator between Heaven and earth. Well may humanity lift its sinful head in hope. Poor fallen man may now have courage to meet his offended God. He may well taste of God's mercy brought to him by the hand of his poor, weak, mortal brother.

Priests may fall from their high station. Yet most priests, by the grace of God, are holy men. It is often asked why do we not resent and refute the endless calumnies that are uttered

[25] Epistle to the Romans vii, 23-25.

against us. Christ has given us counsel in this matter. "Blessed are ye," He says, "when they shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for my sake."[26]

[26] St. Matthew v, 11.

CHAPTER XVII.

Dignities and Titles.

THE ministers of Christ have an official character. Hence it is but natural that they should be known by special titles and that they should wear a distinctive garb.

The jurisdiction of the Church is perfectly graded and regulated. The priest has jurisdiction over his parish. Parishes are ordinarily defined by geographical boundaries. The priest who is placed over all the souls in this defined territory is called the pastor. The priest is called Father or Reverend Father.

These titles have never been officially instituted by the Church. They are an outgrowth of custom. The faithful in all ages have always revered

the priest as a spiritual father. He it is who gives them spiritual birth in the Sacrament of Baptism. He feeds them with the spiritual food of heavenly doctrine. He daily brings the blessings of Heaven into their lives. He brings the consolation of Christ to them in their bitter hour of sorrow.

The distinctive garb of the priest is the cassock, biretta and the Roman collar. The cassock is a long black robe which designates him as a man of serious life and a man of learning. The biretta is a four-cornered cap that originated as a sign of graduation or academic degree in the mediaeval universities.

The Roman collar has come to be generally worn of late years. It differs from other collars in that it is fastened at the back. The cassock and biretta are worn as the everyday dress of priests in most Catholic countries. Elsewhere the Roman collar is the

distinctive mark of the priest. Priests of religious orders wear a habit distinctive of the order to which they belong.

An abbot is the father superior of a religious order. Some abbots are privileged to wear the mitre. Not all religious orders have abbots for superiors. The superior of a Dominican house is called a prior. The superior of a Jesuit house is called rector. The superior of a province, in certain orders, is called the Provincial. The superior of the whole order is called the Father General or the Abbott General. An abbess is the superior in certain orders of nuns. An abbey is a monastery governed by an abbot.

Papal prelates are priests who have been honored with the title that designates them as members of the Pope's household. They have no special jurisdiction or faculties arising from their dignity. They are commonly called

Monsignor with the designation of Right Reverend. They wear purple as a mark of their dignity. A protonotary is one of those who register the official acts of the Holy See. They also wear the purple. There are many titular protonotaries throughout the world.

A papal legate or delegate is an ecclesiastic sent to a country or province as the official representative of the Pope. His powers and duties are defined. Generally papal delegates are consecrated titular bishops or archbishops.

A titular bishop is one who has received episcopal consecration without being given jurisdiction over a diocese. Such are coadjutor or auxiliary bishops and archbishops. Others, too, are sometimes constituted titular bishops. They receive the title as bishop of some ancient episcopal see that has ceased to exist.

Bishops have jurisdiction over a diocese. This means a certain defined territory which is divided into parishes. No priest is permitted to exercise his ministry in a diocese without the consent of the bishop. The bishop wears purple as a mark of his high authority. He wears a ring which signifies that he is devoted to his diocese; it is the sign of fidelity. He carries the crozier which designates him as chief pastor of the flock. He wears the mitre which marks him as a leader amongst men. He is called Right Reverend Bishop, his Lordship, and Most Illustrious Lord.

An archbishop is bishop over a diocese. His jurisdiction is the same as that of a bishop. Yet he is president of all the bishops in his province. He is called the Metropolitan. Several dioceses set off by papal authority form a province. The distinctive insignia of an archbishop is the pallium. This is

a cape-like band of pure wool worn about the shoulders.

The archbishop does not possess direct jurisdiction over the bishops in his province. All bishops are directly subject to the Pope. He appoints them. They must make a report of their diocese to him at certain fixed times. Yet the archbishop has certain rights and prerogatives over the bishops of his province. They are called his suffragan bishops. Certain appeals can be made to him from the bishops of his province.

The archbishop sends to the Pope the names of candidates that have been selected for a vacant bishopric. Three names are chosen by the irremovable rectors of the diocese. The bishops then meet. They may send these same names or they may select three other names. From all the names sent in the Pope names the new bishop.

Where there is a cathedral chapter the members of the chapter select the names instead of the rectors. A chapter is a body of priests attached to a cathedral. They recite the divine office in common every day and fulfil other important duties. The members of cathedral chapters are called canons. There are no cathedral chapters in the United States nor in many other countries.

Primates are bishops or archbishops who possess a certain ecclesiastical jurisdiction over several archdioceses or over all the bishops of a country. They do not possess direct jurisdiction over these bishops. Their jurisdiction is that of presidency and the right of appeal. Primates are now merely honorary titles except that of Hungary.

A patriarch is a bishop or archbishop who has metropolitan power over a vast portion of the Church. Three great patriarchs were recognized in the

earlier centuries of the Church. They were Rome, Alexandria and Antioch.

The Pope has supreme jurisdiction over all the bishops, archbishops, primates and patriarchs of the world. In him resides the whole order of episcopal jurisdiction. The Pope is bishop of the Roman diocese. He is Metropolitan over the Roman province. He is primate over all the bishops of Italy. He is patriarch over the whole Western Church. He is supreme visible head of the whole Church.

Cardinals are the Pope's counselors in the government of the Church. Theirs is the highest dignity next to that of the sovereign Pontiff. As a body they are called the Sacred College of Cardinals. The Pope is not bound to consult them. Yet he seldom fails to make use of their advice and assistance in all matters that belong to the government of the Church.

Cardinals are chosen by the Pope.

He selects whomsoever he will for this diginity. Any priest or bishop may be chosen. Even laymen have been chosen as cardinals. When the Pope creates a cardinal he bestows upon him the scarlet biretta and red hat. In olden times papal legates wore red hats. Thus they might be recognized by all. From this arose the custom of conferring the red hat upon cardinals. Cardinals wear red or scarlet robes.

When the Sacred College is complete there are seventy cardinals. There are six cardinal-bishops, fifty cardinal-priests and fourteen cardinal-deacons. This distinction refers to their title and not to their ecclesiastical dignity. An archbishop may be a cardinal-priest or a cardinal-deacon. The Pope is always chosen from the College of Cardinals.

Cardinals are chosen from the different countries of the world. However, most of them dwell in Rome where

they take an active part in the government of the Church.

The cardinals form the Sacred Congregations of Rome. These are like so many committees that handle divers affairs according to the purpose of each. There are thirteen Sacred Congregations at present. Formerly there were twenty. These make up the Roman Curia.

The Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith is composed of two Congregations. One deals with the affairs of the Oriental Rites. The other deals with matters pertaining to the Latin Rite. This Congregation directs all works instituted for the spread of the Faith. It is called Propaganda.

The mission fields of Asia and Africa are under the direction of this Congregation. The United States has lately been taken from its direction. Hence it no longer has the status of a mission country.

The Congregation of the Holy Office deals with all matters of dogma and morals. It decides all cases of doctrine and heresy. It is set to guard the teaching of the Church.

The Consistorial Congregation deals with matters of administration and practical affairs of the Church. It passes upon those matters that are considered in consistory or meeting of cardinals presided over by the Pope. It deals in a special manner with the promotion of cardinals, patriarchs and archbishops.

The Congregation of the Sacraments is instituted to decide questions pertaining to the Sacraments. All matters relating to the administration of the Sacraments are referred to this Congregation. Cases concerning matrimonial dispensations and the validity of matrimony are submitted to its jurisdiction.

The Congregation of the Council was

instituted to enforce the decrees issued by the Council of Trent. It also solves certain matrimonial cases. It deals with the residence of bishops and with certain faculties which they possess. Especially, however, it interprets the decrees laid down by the Council of Trent.

The Congregation of Religious passes upon all matters pertaining to Religious Orders. It deals with questions that arise between bishops and Religious Orders.

The Congregation of the Index passes upon books and pamphlets that pertain to Faith or morals. It condemns those works that might endanger the Faith or morals of the people. It labels this spiritual poison so that all may be able to avoid it. The list of books which this Congregation has condemned is called the Index. The faithful are forbidden under pain of excommunication to read these books.

Such are books of heretical teachers or apostates maintaining heresies. Such are also books condemned by letters apostolic.

The Congregation of Sacred Rites decides questions of liturgy. It also deals with cases of beatification and canonization. It passes judgment upon cases of martyrdom and upon miracles.

The Congregation of Ceremonies arranges the ceremonial of the Papal Court. It decides all matters of preeminence and attends to the presentation of the insignia to newly created cardinals who dwell outside of Rome.

The Congregation of Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs attends to all grave questions that relate to Christian nations. It is principally concerned with affairs of state between the Papal Court and foreign governments.

The Congregation of Studies regulates the course of studies in Catholic

Universities. It approves the creation of new institutions. It grants the faculty of conferring academic degrees. The Congregation for the building of St. Peter's has the care of keeping up the great basilica of St. Peter's at Rome.

There are three Roman Tribunals. They are: the Sacred Penitentiaria, the Sacred Roman Rota and the Apostolic Signatura. The Sacred Penitentiaria has jurisdiction over all matters of conscience. It grants absolution and dispensations. It commutes penances and decides cases of conscience.

The Sacred Rota decides external ecclesiastical cases of dispute. It deals with judicial and criminal matters. It is a tribunal to which appeal is made from minor judges. It does not decide upon administrative acts of bishops unless these are referred to it by the Pope. The Apostolic Signatura is a tribunal which passes upon certain

cases that are disputed after they have been decided by other tribunals.

There are six different offices in the Roman Curia. They are: the Apostolic Chancery, the Apostolic Dataria, the Apostolic Camera Treasurer, Secretary of State, Secretary of Briefs to Princes and the Secretary of Latin Letters.

These Congregations, Tribunals and Offices make up the remarkable institution of the Roman Curia or Court. Cases of all kinds dealing with the spiritual welfare of three hundred millions of subjects come into this court from all parts of the world. No government of the world, perhaps, has so many concerns as the central government of the Catholic Church.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Vocation to the Priesthood.

CHRIST said to the Apostles: "You have not chosen me: but I have chosen you; and have appointed you, that you should go, and should bring forth fruit."[1] Christ called the Apostles to follow Him, to learn from Him, and to be His ministers. No one can be a priest of God unless He receives a divine call. "Neither doth any man take the honor to himself, but he that is called by God, as Aaron was."[2]

The call which God gives to those whom He wishes to become His ministers is made through the bishop. There need be no interior prompting on the part of the candidate. He need not have had a constant yearning for

[1] St. John xv, 16.
[2] Epistle to the Hebrews v, 4.

the priesthood. He must be fitted in mind and body and character for this sublime dignity. He should be ready to spend himself for the salvation of souls. He should have completed the prescribed course of studies. Then if his bishop calls him to Holy Orders he has a divine vocation. When the bishop ordains him he has been established in the ministry of Christ by divine grace and authority.

The youth who would study for the priesthood must, above all, strive to cultivate the holy virtue of purity. He should labor to make himself a man of character. His life and actions should be guided by fixed principles. He should possess firm standards of conduct based upon the teachings of Holy Faith. He should have a courageous heart. He should cultivate generosity, sincerity and honor.

The life of the priest requires all these qualities. Miserable indeed,

above all men, would be the priest who had not trained his heart for the trials and struggles of his sacred calling. He would be like a coward in the midst of fiercest warfare. He would be like a light-headed child on the pinnacle of a church-steeple.

No man was ever happy or contented in the priesthood unless he found his joy and contentment in the work of the ministry. Some priests live in plenty and abundance. Yet even their lives are filled with daily self-sacrifice. The priest must know the philosophy of obedience. He must be ready to do the bidding even of the humblest child in his parish.

Generally he is not near his ecclesiastical superior. God sends His commands to him through the people. When one of them calls he must obey. No other concern may make him heedless to the least of his flock. For he is the servant of the people.

The priest must be a man of charity. His heart must be filled with human sympathy. It is a mark of a small character to disdain the poor and ignorant. It is a sign of weakness to lord it over the weak. The priest must temper his authority with humility and charity. He must love his people else he can not teach them. He must stoop down to the little ones and to the humble else he will remain a stranger to them.

The priest must be a man of patience and meekness. No one was ever led to virtue by angry words. No one was ever taught to love by bitter railings. "Learn of me," says Christ, "because I am meek and humble of heart."[3]

The priest must be a man of knowledge. "The lips of the priest shall keep knowledge, and they shall seek the law at his mouth: because he is the

[3] St. Matthew xi, 29.

angel of the Lord of hosts."[4] St. Paul exhorts Timothy: "Take heed to thyself and to doctrine: be earnest in them. For in doing this thou shalt save thyself and them that hear thee."[5] Again he says: "Carefully study to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of God."[6]

Those intended for the priesthood should be trained in virtue and character from early youth. The necessary qualities of mind and heart should be fostered in them from childhood. They should be imbued with a love of study from the beginning of their schooldays.

The course of training ordinarily consists in twelve years of prayer and study after the common school course has been completed. Six years are

[4] Malachias ii, 7.
[5] I Epistle to Timothy iv, 16.
[6] II Epistle to Timothy ii, 15.

spent in the study of the classics. This course embraces the study of Latin, Greek, history, mathematics, rhetoric and kindred branches. Two years are then spent in the study of philosophy.

Then the next four years are given to the study of theology. These latter six years are spent in the Seminary. Here the students are called seminarians. They wear the cassock, Roman collar and biretta. During the seminary course they study philosophy, theology, Holy Scripture, Church history, sacred eloquence, liturgy. They are prepared in all things for the work of the priesthood.

The priest must be a man of prayer. No mortal man can fulfil the duties of the priesthood without special help from Heaven. "You are the salt of the earth," said Christ to His disciples, "But if the salt shall lose its savor

wherewith shall it be salted?"[7] The priest must pray for himself and for his people. "O ye priests of the Lord, bless the Lord: praise and exalt him above all forever."[8]

The priest must be a man of mortification. "I chastise my body," says the Apostle, "and bring it into subjection, lest perhaps, when I have preached to others, I myself should become a castaway."[9]

Christ is the model whom the priest should humbly strive to imitate. Christ prayed, He fasted, He labored unceasingly out of love for the salvation of man. As St. Paul says: "Always bearing about in our bodies the mortification of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our bodies."[10]

[7] St. Matthew v, 13.
[8] Daniel iii, 84.
[9] I Epistle to the Corinthians ix, 27.
[10] II Epistle to the Corinthians iv, 10.

CHAPTER XIX.

Celibacy and Other Obligations of Priests.

THE Church demands celibacy of all her priests except those of the Greek rite. This is a disciplinary law made by the authority of the Church. It is not a divine law.

The priest must sacrifice himself for his people. The care of souls must be the sole motive of his life. To be a faithful minister of Christ he must be free from all other cares. Our Saviour Himself said: "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he can not be my disciple."[1] Christ here tells us that those who wish to

[1] St. Luke xiv, 26.

become His disciples must be ready to give up all that are dear to them.

The Apostles left their homes and their all and followed Christ. "Then Peter answering, said to him: Behold we have left all things, and have followed thee: what therefore shall we have? and Jesus said to them: Amen, I say to you . . . everyone that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and shall possess life everlasting."[2]

The vow of celibacy is implied in ordination to subdeaconship. Those who receive Sacred Orders must be at least twenty-three or twenty-four years of age. They have had long years to reflect upon the serious step they are taking. Just before the bishop confers Sacred Orders he tells the candidate that he is free to choose. He may re-

[2] St. Matthew xix, 27-29.

turn to the world and take up life as a layman. Or he may bind himself forever to lead a life of celibacy in the ministry of Christ.

God indeed said to Adam and Eve: "Increase and multiply, and fill the earth."[3] Yet this command was intended for the human race, not for the individual man. Had this command been made for the individual then St. John the Baptist, St. Paul and even Christ were disobedient.

St. Paul gives the reason for celibacy: "I would have you be without solicitude. He that is without wife is solicitous for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please God. But he that is with a wife, is solicitous for the things of the world, how he may please his wife: and he is divided."[4]

The Church has not required celi-

[3] Genesis i, 28.

[4] I Epistle to the Corinthians vii, 32, 33.

bacy in her clergy from the beginning. St. Paul merely counseled celibacy. "But I say to the unmarried . . . it is good for them if they so continue, even as I."[5] Again the Apostle says: "Now concerning virgins, I have no commandment of the Lord; but I give counsel."[6] Yet celibacy began to be practiced from the first centuries of the Church. It is commended by nearly all the Fathers.

Origen wrote in the third century: "It is certain that the unceasing sacrifice is impeded by those who serve the necessities of wedlock. Therefore it appears to me, that it belongs to him alone to offer the unceasing sacrifice, who has devoted himself to an unceasing and perpetual chastity."[7]

St. Epiphanius wrote in the fourth century: "Holy Church does not re-

[5] I Epistle to the Corinthians vii, 8.
[6] I Epistle to the Corinthians vii, 25.
[7] Homily xxiv.

ceive as deacon, priest or bishop, one who is living in wedlock and begetting children, even though the husband of one wife. She receives him only who refrains from that one wife, or is a widower; and this especially when the canons of the Church are strictly observed."[8]

Another grave obligation of the priest is the recitation of the Divine Office. The book which contains the Office is called the Breviary. It is composed of four parts corresponding to the four seasons of the year. The year is arranged according to an ecclesiastical calendar. Each day has its special Office. There are feast days and ordinary days.

The Office consists in the recitation of certain Psalms, extracts from the Old Testament, sketches from the lives of the saints, special tracts relating to the mysteries of Faith, and homilies

[8] Tomus i, Adv. Harres. 59, p. 496.

from the Fathers. Several liturgical hymns are said each day. Each Office also contains many beautiful prayers and antiphons. The recitation of the Office takes about one hour a day. The priest is bound under pain of mortal sin to recite the Divine Office every day.

The Divine Office is the official prayer of the Church. It is essentially a chorus of prayer. The members of Religious Orders recite the Office in common. They usually chant the Psalms. However, the real chorus of the Office consists in the multitude of priests throughout the world. In spirit they all unite to offer up to God this beautiful act of praise and homage.

The Breviary is the priest's constant companion. It is the source of many holy inspirations for every day of his life. It is his prayer of obedience to God. Yet the Breviary does not constitute all the prayers of the faithful

priest. Each morning he spends some time in prayerful meditation upon the mysteries of Faith. He piously prepares to offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

Afterwards he spends some time in prayers of thanksgiving to his Lord and Master who has come into his heart. Daily the devoted priest kneels in prayer before the tabernacle in adoration of our Eucharistic God. At night he kneels in prayer to thank God for the graces he has received during the day. Beautiful indeed is the life of the true priest. Truly may he be called a "man of God."[9]

[9] I Epistle to Timothy vi, 11.

CHAPTER XX.

The Sacrament of Matrimony.

MATRIMONY is the Sacrament through which Christians are united in marriage. Matrimony is a contract by which a man and woman agree to live together unto death as man and wife. The contract of marriage was instituted when God gave Eve in wedlock to Adam. For four thousand years matrimony was a mere contract between man and wife. Christ raised this matrimonial contract to the dignity of a Sacrament.

The words or signs which express the consent of both parties are both the visible sign and the form of this Sacrament. Both parties must freely express their consent.

The union of man and wife signifies

the union of Christ with His Church. This was the intention of Christ when He instituted this Sacrament. It is a corporal union. The contracting parties deliver themselves corporally to each other.

It was thus Christ united Himself to His Church. For this reason the words of consent signify grace. The matrimonial union signifies sanctifying grace. For St. Paul says: "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the Church, and delivered himself up for it: that he might sanctify it, cleansing it by the laver of water in the word of life: That he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing: but that it should be holy and without blemish.

"So also men ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever hated his own flesh: but

nourisheth and cherisheth it, as also Christ does the Church: Because we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall be two in one flesh. This is a great Sacrament, but I speak in Christ and in the Church."[1]

The matrimonial contract signifies the graces that flow from the union of Christ with His Church. This is true, however, only in the marriage of Christians. For them alone matrimony has this signification. Because for them alone Christ instituted the Sacrament of matrimony. The marriage of those who are not Christians is a mere natural contract as it was before the coming of Christ.

Matrimony is a Sacrament of the New Law. Hence, it confers grace upon those who receive it. A mere

[1] Epistle to the Ephesians v, 25-32.

contract that conferred no grace could not signify the union of Christ with His Church. Otherwise it would mean that this union of Christ with His Church brought no graces.

The contracting parties themselves administer the Sacrament of Matrimony. They must be in the state of grace when they receive the Sacrament of Matrimony. For it is a Sacrament of the living. The form is the consent expressed. Then more fully: "I take thee for my lawful husband (or wife), to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death do us part."

Matrimony, like all other Sacraments, must be administered under the direction of the Church. Catholics can not validly enter matrimony except before a priest or bishop. Marriage is valid when contracted before

any priest or bishop in his own jurisdiction.

However, it is not licit before any other than the pastor or bishop of the contracting parties. Yet any priest may be delegated by the pastor or bishop. Besides the pastor of the contracting parties, two witnesses must also be present. These two witnesses are required for the validity of the contract.

Catholics who attempt to contract marriage before a civil magistrate or a preacher are not really married. The marriage is invalid even though one party only is a Catholic. Those who attempt such a marriage incur ecclesiastical censure. They can not be reconciled to the Church without a dispensation from the bishop. They must then go to confession. Ordinarily they are required to perform public penance. This is intended to repair the great scandal they have caused.

They must then contract marriage according to the laws of the Church.

The marriage of those who have been raised Protestants is considered valid. It matters not before whom they have been married. Yet were Catholics to renounce the Church and declare themselves Protestants they could not contract marriage validly outside the Church. They can not have the privilege of those who are supposed to be in good faith.

The unbaptized may contract marriage as they will. Marriage for them is a natural contract. Their marriage is considered valid. No new marriage ceremony is required of Protestants or the unbaptized who become Catholics. This because the Church teaches that they have contracted marriage validly.

The priest blesses the marriages at which he assists. He says: "I join you together in marriage, in the name

of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen." "How can we find words to describe," says Tertullian, "the happiness of that marriage which the Church joins together; and the oblation confirms, and the blessing seals: the angels report; the Father ratifies."[2]

The prime object of matrimony is the propagation of the human race. "And God created man to his own image . . . male and female he created them. And God blessed them and said: Increase and multiply, and fill the earth."[3]

Marriage is a holy state. Those who live in holy wedlock fulfil a high mission. With God they are procreators of men. God cooperates with them in the generation of children. At their command, as it were, God creates an immortal soul every time a

[2] Liber ii Ad Uxorem, n. 9.
[3] Genesis i, 27, 28.

human body is generated by them. The procreation of children is the first and greatest duty of their state.

God has wondrously constituted His creatures so that they may propagate their kind. The lower animals do so by instinct. They never interfere with the process of generation. Man alone is capable of thwarting the will of God. Man alone can debase his noble faculty of procreation.

Of all the sins that man can commit none perhaps is more heinous than that of interfering with God's law of human generation. It is the sin of Onan. This wicked man hindered God's law "lest children should be born. . . . And therefore the Lord slew him, because he did a detestable thing."[4]

This sin is often called race-suicide today. Pagan ideas have filtered into modern society. Many shrink from

[4] Genesis xxxviii, 9, 10.

the God-given duty of child-bearing and give themselves up to lives of pleasure. Men contrive all kinds of excuses for preventing natural offspring. Some maintain that they are too poor. Others are too sickly. Others are too busy. Thus they rebel against the decrees of Divine Providence.

There are those who teach that prevention is a duty in certain cases. These are men who set their own human idea against the wisdom of God. "Wherefore God gave them up to the desires of their heart, unto uncleanness, to dishonor their own bodies among themselves. Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator."[5]

The secondary end of matrimony is to enable men to control their baser passions and to enjoy the pleasures of family life. Yet marriage should never

[5] Epistle to the Romans i, 24, 25.

be looked upon as a mere means of satisfying lust. "For we are the children of saints, and we must not be joined together like heathens that know not God . . . not for fleshly lust . . . but only for the love of posterity."[6]

[6] Tobias viii, 5-9.

CHAPTER XXI.

Indissolubility of Marriage.

MATRIMONY produces a bond of union between man and wife which can not be severed except by death. The Sacrament of Matrimony increases sanctifying grace in the soul if it be worthily received. Those who receive this Sacrament in the state of sin do not receive sanctifying grace. However, the grace revives if the hindrance is afterwards removed.

The Sacrament of Matrimony confers sacramental grace. This grace enables the married to resist the assaults of concupiscence. The evil desires of the flesh are not satisfied with one person. Concupiscence seeks not the utility which nature intends. It seeks pleasure alone. Satiated lust

loathes its victim. Sacramental grace enables the husband to be content with his own wife. It enables the married to use marriage for its proper purpose. It enables them to bear the burdens of their state.

The bond of marriage can not be broken except by the death of one party. In no case can one party enter another marriage contract so long as the other party is alive. It might seem that if two persons freely enter a contract they can dissolve it by mutual consent. This is true of material contracts amongst men. Ordinary contracts are dissolved by the agreement of both parties concerned.

If matrimony be viewed as a means of propagating the human race, there would often seem to be reasons for dissolving the marriage contract. Some women are sterile. Others suffer from some chronic disease that hinders them from fulfilling their conjugal duties.

It would seem reasonable to sever such a union.

St. Thomas answers the difficulty: "Matrimony was instituted mainly for the common good of humanity because of its principal object, which is the good of offspring, though it was instituted secondarily for the good of the contracting parties insofar as it is a remedy against concupiscence. Thus in the laws of matrimony more attention is paid to what is beneficial for all than to what is beneficial for one. Though the inseparability of matrimony may hinder the interest of offspring in a particular case (because of sterility), yet it promotes the interest of offspring in general."[1]

The common good is always superior to the individual good. This principle is recognized by all governments. In time of national crises the individual is sometimes forced to take up arms

[1] Supplement q. 67; a. 1.

and give his life for the welfare of the nation at large. No society could exist unless the interest of the individual were subservient to the common interest of all. So it is with human society. Its first great foundation is the family. Matrimony is the bond of union in the family. States are composed of families. Individuals could not perpetuate society.

Divorce is perhaps the greatest evil in the social order. It strikes at the very vitals of a nation. It makes the family an unstable institution. It gives lust license to seek promiscuity. It enables corrupt human weakness to shirk the responsibilities imposed upon it by nature. Divorce endangers the welfare of offspring. It destroys homes. It blights the bloom of filial love. It tears little ones away from their parents. It marks them as the children of disgrace.

Divorce is essentially a pagan idea.

It is a product of lust. It is a tenet of Epicurean philosophy. Life is a time of pleasure and self-indulgence. "Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we may die." According to this pagan creed man is free to seek all that can bring him pleasure so long as he can escape the civil law. If he can make the conquest of one younger and more beautiful and more attractive than his wife, he calls her his "soul-mate." He then puts away his wife and marries the other.

Undoubtedly there are many joined in wedlock whose tempers are incompatible. Many good men are joined to fickle and faithless women. Many devoted women are joined to base and shiftless husbands. Their earthly lives are perhaps filled with bitterness and unhappiness because of their matrimonial union. Children are growing up in sin and depravity because of the evil parent.

It seems cruel that the innocent party should suffer because of the other's guilt. It seems unreasonable to demand that they respect a bond that unites them to reprobates. Indeed, if matrimony were intended solely to bring earthly joy to the individual it would be impossible to defend such a union.

If pagan teachings represent the true philosophy of life then these unhappy ones should be free to seek more agreeable life-companions. If man was created for earthly pleasures alone then the time is short. He must hasten to indulge himself before the end comes. If he must labor hard in dire poverty he is also in an unpleasant position. He should steal a million from his neighbor and live in luxury. Pagan philosophy should permit him to do so.

If he is in prison for a crime he should be liberated. His crime was a mistake, just as is the unhappy mar-

riage. The dark prison cell does not permit him to enjoy life. If he has enlisted in the army and finds life disagreeable he should desert the colors for the same reason. For he is a follower of Epicurus. He seeks only his own individual pleasure. He cares not for the common weal.

Divorce is the destroyer of nations. It is a sure mark of social decay. Christianity can never recognize divorce. For fifteen centuries after Christ divorce was unknown amongst Christian peoples. During all those ages the faithful never dreamed of declaring divorce lawful. They might as easily have abrogated the sixth commandment.

The Catholic Church has taught since the days of the Apostles that marriage is indissoluble. This doctrine she must and will continue to teach unto the end of time. "To them that are married," says the Apostle, "not

I, but the Lord commandeth, that the wife depart not from her husband, and if she depart, that she remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband. And let not the husband put away his wife."[2]

In another place he says: "For the woman that hath a husband whilst her husband liveth is bound to the law. But if her husband be dead she is loosed from the law of her husband. Therefore, whilst her husband liveth she shall be called an adulteress, if she be with another man."[3]

Christ Himself in emphatic terms declares that marriage is indissoluble: "And it hath been said: Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a bill of divorce. But I say to you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, excepting for the cause of fornication, maketh her commit adultery;

[2] I Epistle to the Corinthians vii, 10, 11.
[3] Epistle to the Romans vii, 2, 3.

and he that shall marry her that is put away, committeth adultery."[4]

Here Christ grants that a separation may take place because of fornication. Yet He does not intend to intimate that the marriage bond is broken. For He adds: "He that shall marry her that is put away, committeth adultery." Now this could not be true unless the bond of matrimony still remained.

The Pharisees thought to ensnare Christ on the question of divorce. "And the Pharisees coming to him asked him: Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? tempting him. But he answering, saith to them: What did Moses command you? Who said: Moses permitted to write a bill of divorce, and to put her away. To whom Jesus answering said: Because of the hardness of your heart he wrote you that precept. 'But from the beginning

[4] St. Matthew v, 31, 32.

of creation, God made them male and female. For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife. And they two shall be in one flesh. Wherefore, now they are not two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder.'

"In the house again his disciples asked him concerning the same thing. And he said to them: Whosoever shall put away his wife and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if the wife shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery."[5]

St. Luke also records the clear words of Christ against divorce. "Everyone that putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and he that marrieth her that is put away from her husband, committeth adultery."[6]

[5] St. Mark x, 2-12. [6] St. Luke xvi, 18.

The Church sometimes permits married persons to live apart. Catholics who think they have a sufficient cause for separation must submit their case to the ecclesiastical authority. Every decision in this matter must come from the bishop of the diocese in which the parties live.

They are generally permitted to live apart only for a time. They are always bound to be reconciled when it is possible. Even though they are permitted to remain apart permanently, they are still husband and wife until death.

This privilege of separation is sometimes granted to those who wish to take Holy Orders or enter Religion. In this case certain conditions are laid down for the benefit of the other party. The other party must consent to the separation. There must also be assurance that the other party will be able to lead a continent life.

Marriage that has not been consummated may be dissolved if one of the parties makes a Solemn Profession in some Religious Order. The other party is then free to contract another marriage. The parties have been properly married, but they have not become "one flesh."

Two months are granted after marriage in which to deliberate. During this time they are not bound to enter into conjugal relations. Either of them may enter Religion even though the other objects. The bond of a nonconsummated marriage is not broken when one party enters a novitiate. It is dissolved only when the Solemn Religious Profession is made. The Pope also can dissolve a nonconsummated marriage.

The marriage of unbaptized persons may be dissolved under certain conditions, when one party is converted to the Faith. This dissolution of marriage

is called the "Pauline Privilege." "If any brother hath a wife that believeth not," says St. Paul, "and she consent to dwell with him, let him not put her away. And if any woman hath a husband that believeth not, and he consent to dwell with her, let her not put away her husband. . . . But if the unbeliever depart, let him depart. For a brother or sister is not under servitude in such cases."[7]

Marriage can be dissolved by the Pauline Privilege. This supposes that one party has been converted to the Faith. The other refuses to live with this party. Or he refuses to grant the free exercise of the Christian religion.

The Pauline Privilege can not be used when the converted party leaves the other party. Nor can it ever be used without a papal dispensation. The party that has been baptized must also ask the other party to live with

[7] I Epistle to the Corinthians vii, 12, 15.

him. This is called the interpellation. The Pope may dispense from this requirement when he sees fit.

The bond of marriage, however, is not dissolved when the dispensation is granted. It is dissolved only when the baptized party contracts another marriage. Should the other party be converted in the meantime they are then bound to live together. A party who has been granted the Pauline Privilege may contract marriage even with another unbaptized person. This, of course, implies the proper dispensation.

If a polygamist is converted he may retain one of his wives. Should one of the number be converted with him, she may continue as his wife. If none is converted, he may retain the one whom he first took as his wife. His marriage with this one would be considered valid. They need not renew their consent. He may, however, choose another to be his lawful wife.

In this case they should renew their consent before the priest and two witnesses.

Those who procure a civil divorce and contract another marriage are excommunicated by the Church. This second marriage is not valid. In the words of Christ such persons are living in adultery.

"What is that law laid down by St. Paul?" asks St. John Chrysostom. "The woman," he says, "is bound to the law. By no means should she enter other nuptials with another. Behold, with how much care the words are chosen! For he did not say: let her live with the man as long as he lives. He said: the woman is bound to the law as long as her husband lives. Even if she gives him a "bill of divorce,' even if she leaves his house, even if she goes to another man, she is bound to the law and she is an adulteress. . . . Do not tell me of civil laws that grant

divorces and separate husbands and wives. For on the day of judgment God will not judge thee according to these laws, but according to the laws which He Himself made."[8]

St. Jerome explains the same law: "The Apostle rejected all pretexts and declared that if a woman married another during the lifetime of her husband, she is an adulteress. . . . Even though her husband should be an adulterer, a Sodomist, though he be covered with crimes and abandoned by his wife because of his depravity, he is to be considered her husband and she can not be married to another."[9]

[8] Sermon, m. 51, 218.
[9] Epistola 55 ad Amand., n. 3.

CHAPTER XXII.

Impediments to Marriage.

AN IMPEDIMENT is a moral obstacle which hinders certain persons from making the marriage contract. Some impediments render the solemnization of marriage unlawful for the persons concerned. Other impediments make marriage between certain persons invalid. Matrimonial impediments are laid down both by divine law and by ecclesiastical law. The Church has power to decide and define impediments to marriage.

It is unlawful to solemnize marriage during Advent and Lent. This is called the "closed time." It extends from the first Sunday of Advent to the Monday after the Feast of the Epiph-

any, and from Ash Wednesday to the second Monday after Easter.

Marriage may indeed be contracted at any time during the year. During the "closed time" the solemnity attending marriage is forbidden. The nuptial blessing is not given during this time, nor is nuptial Mass celebrated. The banns of Matrimony may be published during the "closed time."

It is unlawful to solemnize marriage before the banns have been published. The banns are three public announcements made on three consecutive Sundays or holidays of obligation. The marriage ceremony ordinarily takes place immediately after the third publication of the banns. If the marriage does not take place within four months after their publication the banns must be published again.

The banns are intended to protect the integrity of matrimony. The Church has ever been opposed to secret

marriages. By means of the banns great evils are sometimes averted. The publication of the banns imposes a grave obligation on all the faithful to whom the marriage thus becomes known.

If anyone knows a secret impediment to the marriage announced he is bound under pain of mortal sin to make it known to the pastor. However, charity might suggest that he first warn the party concerned to desist from the marriage. If the person withdraw, he would not be bound to make the impediment known.

A person is bound to make known an impediment even though he learned it in strictest confidence. He is bound to reveal it even though he has taken an oath to keep it secret. Nothing else than the seal of confession can bind him to silence.

Even if a man told the priest in sacramental confession that he already

had a wife living, the priest would be bound to maintain silence and assist at the sacrilegious marriage ceremony. This implies that he otherwise intended to assist at the marriage. The priest could only warn him in the confessional to withdraw. Afterwards, he could not even in private mention this matter to the party who confessed it.

The Church also intends by the banns to ask the faithful to pray for those who are about to assume the grave obligation of matrimony.

Those who have made a simple vow of chastity can not licitly contract marriage. A simple vow to take Holy Orders also forms an impediment to marriage. He who has made such a vow must obtain a dispensation before he can licitly contract marriage.

A previous promise to marry another is also an impediment. This promise is generally called the engagement or espousals. It does not form an imped-

iment to marriage unless it has been drawn up in writing before the pastor and two witnesses. However, the engagement may be broken by mutual agreement.

To be valid marriage must be contracted before the pastor or bishop of the place in which the ceremony takes place. The pastor or bishop may delegate any other priest to assist at marriages. Even the pastor of the contracting parties can not validly assist at a marriage outside his parish limits unless he be delegated by the pastor or bishop of the place.

A pastor or bishop in his own jurisdiction may validly assist at the marriage of Catholics from any other place. However, it would be illicit for him to do so without permission from the pastor or bishop of the contracting parties.

Error as to the identity of the person with whom matrimony is contracted

renders the marriage invalid. Error in regard to the character and disposition of the person does not affect marriage. Error as to the essential nature of matrimony may affect the validity of marriage.

If a person merely intends to enter a soluble contract, the marriage may be declared invalid. However, a general intention to contract true matrimony suffices for the validity of marriage.

Marriage contracted under force of grave fear or violence may be declared invalid. This does not mean that there was no consent. The Church declares marriages invalid when consent was extorted by grave fear or threat of violence. If there is a doubt as to whether the fear was grave, the marriage is considered valid. By this it is understood that the person is unjustly threatened.

There is no dispensation from the

impediment of grave fear. However, the marriage can be made valid as soon as the grave fear disappears.

Abduction renders marriage invalid. Abduction means that the woman has been carried off against her will. She can not validly contract matrimony so long as she is in the power of her abductor. If the woman goes willingly with her captor their flight is considered an elopement. This does not affect the validity of marriage. Abduction of the man does not constitute an impediment to marriage.

Boys under fourteen years of age and girls under twelve can not validly contract matrimony. This is called the impediment of age. No dispensation to marry can be granted those who are under this age. Young folks who have reached this age may contract marriage validly even contrary to the will of their parents. If such marriage

has been contracted before the proper ecclesiastical authorities it is valid.

Physical impotence, under certain conditions, renders marriage invalid. To render marriage invalid, impotence must be perpetual and incurable. It must also have existed at the time of the marriage. It need only be relative. It need only refer to the two contracting parties. Sterility, however, does not affect the validity of marriage.

Eunuchs can not validly contract marriage. Marriage may be valid though the contracting parties never enter into conjugal relations. However, they must be physically capable of these relations. Otherwise the marriage is invalid. The question of impotence can be readily decided by medical men. The principles of impotence govern the marriage of hermaphrodites.

Relationship forms an impediment to marriage. There are three kinds of

relationship, natural, spiritual and legal. Natural relationship is also called consanguinity or blood-relationship.

Blood relations within the fourth degree of kindred can not validly contract matrimony. Consanguinity in the direct line relates to the direct descendants and forbears. Parents and their children are related in the first degree. Grandparents and their grandchildren are related in the second degree. Great-grandparents and their great-grandchildren are related in the third degree. Great-great-grandparents and their great-great-grandchildren are related in the fourth degree.

Consanguinity in the oblique line relates to indirect relatives. Brothers and sisters are related in the first degree. The children of brothers and sisters are related in the second degree. They are first cousins. The grandchildren of brothers and sisters are related in the third degree. They are

second cousins. The great-grandchildren of brothers and sisters are related in the fourth degree. They are third cousins.

Dispensation from oblique consanguinity may be granted those who are related in the fourth, third and even the second degree. The same may be said of unequal relationship in the oblique line. The children and grandchildren of brothers and sisters are related in the third degree touching the second degree. Grandchildren and great-grandchildren of brothers and sisters are related in the fourth degree touching the third degree.

Relationship is often multiplex. When there is doubt as to the degree of relationship the matter should be submitted to the ecclesiastical authorities.

Spiritual relationship is that which arises from the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation. The one who baptizes and the sponsors of Baptism con-

tract spiritual relationship with the person baptized and his parents. The sponsors in Confirmation contract spiritual relationship with the person confirmed and his parents. Matrimony can not be validly contracted by these persons unless they have obtained a dispensation from the bishop.

Legal relationship arises from legal adoption. An adopted child can not validly marry his adopted parent. Nor can an adopted child marry the children of his adopted parents if they have lived under the same roof during the time of his adoption. The impediment arising from legal relationship is subject to dispensation when there is sufficient cause.

Affinity is a relationship which arises from carnal union whether it be licit or illicit. It is an impediment which renders marriage invalid. The man can not validly marry his wife's blood relations to the fourth degree of kin-

dred. Nor can the wife validly marry her husband's blood relations to the fourth degree of kindred. Nor can a person validly marry the relations of one with whom he has had complete carnal relations. In this case, where the relations are unlawful, the impediment extends only to the second degree of kindred.

A solemn vow of chastity made in a Religious Order forms an impediment which makes marriage invalid. The Pope can dispense from a solemn vow of chastity. However, this dispensation is very rarely granted.

Holy Orders forms an impediment to valid marriage. Subdeacons, deacons, priests and bishops can not validly contract matrimony. If one goes through a marriage ceremony he is not really married.

Those who are constituted in Holy Orders and those bound by a solemn vow of chastity are excommunicated

if they attempt marriage. The persons with whom they enter this unholy alliance are also excommunicated.

There is a threefold impediment to valid marriage called the impediment of crime. If two conspire in the murder of a husband or wife with the intention of contracting matrimony, they incur an impediment which renders their marriage invalid. If two persons commit adultery and one of them murders the other's wife or husband so as to be able to marry, they incur this impediment.

Then those who commit adultery with the promise of marriage after the death of either's husband or wife, incur this impediment. The Church can dispense in all three cases if there is a sufficient reason for so doing. However, the Church rarely dispenses in the two cases of murder. If the murder is public no dispensation is ever granted.

Marriage is forbidden with non-Catholics whether they be baptized or unbaptized. These are called mixed marriages. Dispensation, however, is granted from this impediment when there is sufficient reason.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Mixed Marriage.

THE marriage of a Catholic with a non-Catholic is called a mixed marriage. Such marriages are forbidden by the Church. However, dispensation is often granted Catholics to marry non-Catholics. Strict conditions are laid down for those who apply for dispensation to contract mixed marriage.

Both parties must sign contracts in the presence of two witnesses. The non-Catholic signs the following: "I, the undersigned, not a member of the Catholic Church, wishing to contract marriage with N. N., a member of the Catholic Church, propose to do so with the understanding that the marriage bond thus contracted is indis-

soluble, except by death, and I promise on my word of honor that N. N. shall be permitted the free exercise of religion according to the Catholic belief, and that all children of either sex born of this marriage shall be baptized and educated, even if N. N. should die first, in the faith and according to the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. I furthermore promise that no other marriage ceremony than that by a Catholic priest shall take place."

The Catholic party signs the following: "I, N. N., a Catholic, wishing to marry N. N., a non-Catholic, hereby promise that if the Right Reverend Bishop finds a sufficient canonical reason for granting me a dispensation I will have all my children baptized and reared in the Catholic Church, sending them, if possible, to a Catholic school, and will practice my religion faithfully, and do all in my power, especially by prayer, good example and frequentation

of the Sacraments, to bring about the conversion of my consort. I also declare that I do not look upon these, our promises, as a reason why a dispensation should be given me, but as the conditions, without which a dispensation could not be lawfully used, even though otherwise granted for sufficient cause."

Though these contracts be expressed in different words, they always contain the same conditions. Mixed marriages are not celebrated in the Church. The banns are not published. Nuptial Mass is not celebrated. The nuptial blessing is not given. The priest assists at the marriage without surplice or stole.

The Church has always opposed mixed marriages. They are unwise for both parties. The Catholic often endangers his faith. The children are often poorly reared because one parent is indifferent to religion.

Mixed marriages often cause disunion and unhappiness in the home. Religion is certainly the most important question of life. Man and wife, father and mother, are divided on this all-important subject. There can not be perfect harmony between them. Their viewpoint is different on all that pertains to moral and religious teaching.

After the fervor of the first love cools, then serious life begins. They then realize that their hearts are different. It is then too late. Sometimes the non-Catholic will even seek freedom in a divorce court. This is one of the great dangers that hangs over those who rush blindly into mixed marriage. The non-Catholic may forget his promises. He may be influenced by calumnies against the Church. He may retract the promise he made to consider marriage indissoluble.

Those who contemplate marriage

with a non-Catholic should weigh the matter well before it is too late. They should ask their intended to learn all about the Catholic Faith before the marriage. This is, in fact, often demanded by the bishop. It is but proper that the non-Catholic should know something of the duties that the Catholic will have to fulfil.

Above all, they should strive to realize that there is no union of hearts without unity of Faith. "Since marriage must be sanctified by the priestly veil and blessing," says St. Ambrose, "how can that be called a union where there is no agreement in faith?"[1]

[1] Tomus ii, Ep. xix, n. 7.

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